the weekly Standard

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JEFF BERGNER

THE ROAD TO TIMES SQUARE

BILL ROGGIO

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From: Taliban News
Date: Sun, May 2, 2010 at 2:37 AM
Subject: Qari Hussain Mehsud from
responsibility of recent Attack on
To: Bill Roggio

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v

You're the first one to know

From: Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan
Date: Sun, May 2, 2010 at 8:33 PM
Subject: Hakeemullah Mehsud is Alive and Healthy and Delivering news about Attacks on USA
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2008 YON GOICOECHEA, leader of the pro-democracy student-led movement in Venezuela

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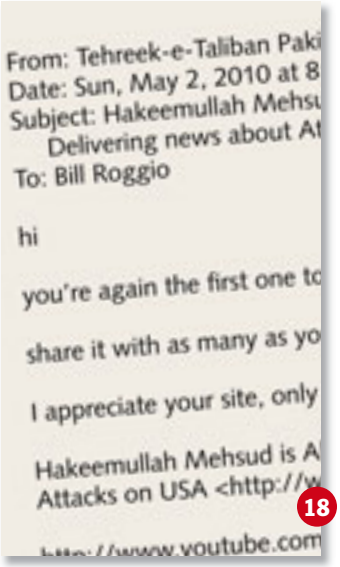

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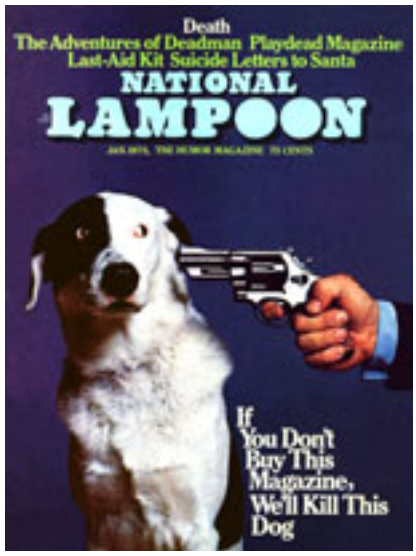
The Final Days of *Newsweek*?

When it was announced last week that the Washington Post Company had officially put *Newsweek* on the block for sale, THE SCRAPBOOK was instantly reminded of the classic 1973 *National Lampoon* cover, depicting a winsome mutt looking slightly askance at a revolver pointed directly at its head: "If You Don't Buy This Magazine, We'll Kill This Dog."

If the joke had been transferred to the cover of *Newsweek*, THE SCRAPBOOK wouldn't bet on the mutt's long-term prospects. For the sad truth is that, in the Internet age, *Newsweek*, along with the other two newsweeklies (*Time*, *U.S. News & World Report*), has been sliding slowly but surely into oblivion, and its parent company has been trying for years to unload it.

Which, from one point of view, is too bad. THE SCRAPBOOK is never overjoyed to learn about the impending death of any historic publication (perhaps with one or two exceptions) and *Newsweek* does contain—well,



it publishes excellent columns from Robert J. Samuelson and George F. Will every week. But the fact is that not only has *Newsweek* suffered from its online competition, it seems to have done everything within its power to hasten its own demise. During the 2008 presidential election, for example, its fawningly voluminous coverage of Barack Obama—we lost count of the number of heroic cover portraits—made it something of a journalistic laughingstock, and certainly affirmed every weary accusation of liberal bias in the mainstream media. One year ago, when editor Jon Meacham announced a comprehensive overhaul—designed to create a left-wing journal of opinion, a "thought leader" destined to appeal to an "elite audience"—the faint sounds of trouble rose in volume to a death knell.

To be sure, *Newsweek* may yet find some buyer willing to pay millions to assume colossal debt and provide a hefty subsidy for a product no one wants. But as THE SCRAPBOOK carefully perused the relevant story in the *Washington Post*, by Frank Ahrens and Howard Kurtz, it was clear that the *Post* is more than ready to move on. Post Company Chairman Donald Graham delivered the grim tidings to his startled *Newsweek* colleagues by conference call—one way to put some symbolic distance between the two—and the saga of *Newsweek* was briefly described as an incident in the glorious history of the *Washington Post*: "*Newsweek*, which was founded in 1933, has been part of the *Post*'s DNA since the paper bought the magazine in 1961 at the urging of *Newsweek*'s Washington bureau chief Benjamin C. Bradlee, who went on to a storied career as executive editor of the *Post*."

Best of all were the generous comments of the storied executive editor himself, 88-year-old Benjamin C. Bradlee: "I loved it," he said of *Newsweek*. "It gave me my first shot. It was a great magazine." Then he quickly corrected himself: "It is a great magazine." At which point THE SCRAPBOOK pictured Bradlee adjusting his tie, taking a sip from his lime juice and gin, and leaning slowly backwards into his *chaise*

What They Were Thinking

AP / CHARLES DHARAPAK

President Barack Obama and Louisiana governor Bobby Jindal confer over the Gulf oil spill.

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longue: "Nobody says you have to keep a magazine that is costing an arm and a leg," he declared. "I understand why Don put it on the market."

Translation: My pension and stock options are safe, and the very best of luck to my good friends at *Newsweek*. ♦

Root Causes Watch

The media love positing explanations for terrorism—poverty, lack of education, post-traumatic stress—that shift blame from the terrorists themselves and, indeed, make the case that they are themselves victims. The most inane example of this tendency in the Times Square bomber coverage? CNN's Jim Acosta, noting that Faisal Shahzad's Connecticut house was foreclosed on: "One would have to imagine that that brought a lot of pressure and a lot of heartache on that family." ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'Leave it to an ecological disaster unfolding in the Gulf of Mexico and lapping up on the shores of Louisiana to put me and Sarah Palin on the same page. Usually, when the former Alaska governor issues something on Facebook, I roll my eyes at her empty rhetoric about common-sense conservative solutions or some-such. But on the issue of . . . " (Jonathan Capehart, *Washington Post*, May 3). ♦

From the 'We Could Be Greece' Files

On April 30, the *New York Times* reported on the austerity measures the IMF and Europeans would attach to the proposed bailout of Greece.

> Among the most significant features of the plan, a Greek government official said, would be a measure making it easier for the government to lay off some of the many thousands of public sector workers, whose low levels of productivity and high wages are a big contributor to Greece's debt problem. Until now, the government has not been able to lay off civil servants, whose employment rights are in effect constitutionally guaranteed.
>
> Another reform high on the list is removing the state from the marketplace in crucial sectors like health care, transportation and energy and allowing private investment. Economists say that the liberalization of trucking routes—where a trucking license can cost up to $90,000—and the health care industry would help bring down prices in these areas, which are among the highest in Europe.

So Greece, teetering on the edge of bankruptcy, is moving to reduce the role of government in health care in order to make the system more efficient. And the United States, not yet teetering on the edge of bankruptcy, is dramatically increasing the role of government in its health care sector. The editorial board of the *New York Times* should start reading their paper's news pages. ♦

You Can Get a Man with a Gun

A very respectful tip of The Scrapbook homburg to Corporal of Horse Craig Harrison, 35—a British sniper who, with two bullets in succession, took out two Taliban fighters firing a machine gun at his comrades—and then hit the gun itself with his third shot. Harrison was taking aim from an astonishing mile and a half away, a new world record.

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As the *Sunday Times* of London reported last week, "The shooting . . . was at such extreme range that the 8.59mm bullets took almost three seconds to reach their target after leaving the barrel of the rifle at almost three times the speed of sound. The distance to Harrison's two targets was measured by a GPS system at 8,120ft, or 1.54 miles. The previous record for a sniper kill is 7,972ft, set by a Canadian soldier [Corporal Rob Furlong] who shot dead an al Qaeda gunman in March 2002."

Craig Harrison

The feat was accomplished during fighting in Helmand Province last November, but the fact of its breaking the record was discovered only recently. The Accuracy International L115A3 rifle is advertised as effective up to about 5,000 feet. A spokesman for the manufacturer told the *Times* that "It is still fairly accurate beyond 4,921ft, but at that distance luck plays as much of a part as anything."

The Scrapbook is not entirely convinced that luck played that large a role. There was this detail from the account in the London tabloid, the *Sun*: "To compensate for the spin and drift of the .338 bullets as they flew 1.54 miles—the length of 25 football pitches—Craig had to aim 6ft high and 20ins to the left."

The *Sun* also had by far the best after-action report from the sniper himself: "They were firing on the troop commander—I gave them the good news. They didn't f— like it." ♦

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The Birds and the Beatitudes

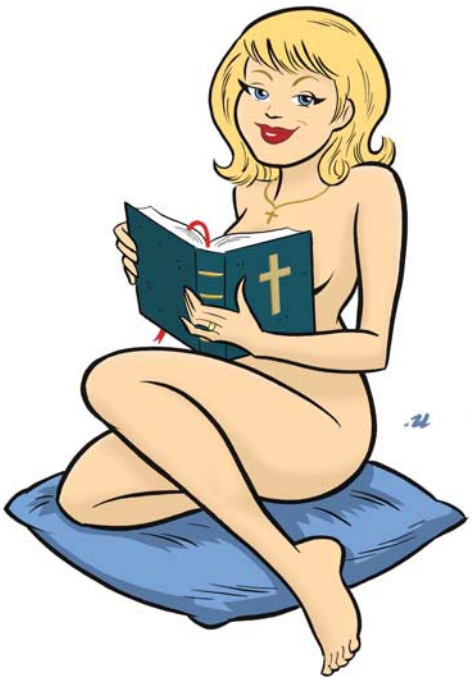
I've never much related to adults who complain about their strict religious upbringings. As a Southern Baptist, I had one. But as someone who is now a self-styled rebel in the tradition of the young Brando or Bowzer from Sha Na Na (wearing black tank T-shirts to editorial meetings to emit an air of streetwise dangerousness), I find mine rather useful.

I didn't envy my libertine neighborhood friends, who could watch R-rated movies and call their hippie parents by their first names. Even if my folks occasionally plunged into my record collection to ensure there wasn't any contraband containing backward-masked messages from Satan, did these friends, with their fathers getting baked while listening to Lothar and The Hand People, have it much better? How to rebel against their parents? By starting a D.A.R.E chapter and blasting Amy Grant really loud from their room? Repression is the incubator of creative expression, as anyone who's ever seen *Footloose* knows.

The only downside, if you can call it that, was that I came to some things late. Like sexual education. My parents clearly had sex—my sister and I were Exhibits A and B—but they didn't care to talk about it. Which was fine by me. In my sheltered Christian-school world, I didn't really know what I was missing. There, sexual education pretty much consisted of whatever you gathered on the playground from the kids who had cable.

When it came time to have The Talk—after watching a racy *Waltons* rerun in which someone got pregnant—my dad didn't talk much at all. Rather, he handed me a copy of Dr. James Dobson's *Preparing for Adolescence*. I skipped the boring stuff on problem skin and peer pressure and went straight to the good parts: the sex chapter, entitled "Something Crazy Is Happening to My Body."

There, on page 60, which I must've read several dozen times, Dr. Dobson pretty much covered it from soup to nuts, starting with the man and woman removing all their clothing, and ending when "they both have a kind of tingly feeling that lasts for about a minute or two." When I later took human sexuality courses, learning that studies show the average "tingly feeling" lasts about ten seconds, I was left with one conclusion about my earliest education: lucky Dobsons.



ROB ULLMAN

While I eventually became an enthusiastic booster of sex, I can't say the same for advances in Christian sexual education. As the rest of the culture has been hypersexualized to within an inch of its life, it's no surprise that the church is following suit, advertising schlocky how-to-have-better-sex sermons, all naturally under the guise of marriage. Sure, sex is a gift from God, as the preachers/sex therapists say. But does the modern church have to unwrap its presents in front of everybody? The new "Sexy Christianity" sounds as incongruous as "Canadian military" or "feminist literature."

Recently someone sent me a link to a website that's clearly a product of this trend in the church. The authors of christiannymphos.org strive to eliminate taboos. Under cutesy handles like "Cinnamon Sticks," these ladies celebrate "Married Sex: Spicy, the way God intended it to be!" They remind me of some devoutly religious friends we had who, whenever you were in their presence, used to grab big handfuls of each other while ferociously kissing. When you'd protest, they'd say, "It's okay—we're married." No, it's not, you'd say, "I'm eating."

But throw in some God-talk, and Christian nymphos can write as spicy as they like. I went to their "position page" expecting some sort of ethical manifesto. Instead, they detail 99 sex positions—most intriguingly the Italian Chandelier. They discuss all manner of techniques, including some that sound physically impossible. The site even has a link to a "Christian Love Toys" emporium, which provides a "safe and sexy place for married couples." How this differs from non-Christian love toys, I'm unclear. Perhaps you read the Song of Solomon before popping in the batteries.

Recently, my wife reminded me that it's about time for me to have The Talk with our older son. I don't know how much he knows. Probably more than I think—we do have cable. But like my father before me, I'll probably pass the buck. I just haven't decided how. Not, certainly, with christiannymphos.org. The Italian Chandelier would only confuse him. In fact, it confuses me. Maybe I can get that old *Waltons* episode on DVD, then refer him to Dr. Dobson if he has any questions.

Matt Labash

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In 2009, Identity Theft Cost Americans

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Source: Javelin Strategy & Research. "2010 Identity Fraud Survey Report." February 2010.

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Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in the nation. Over 11 million Americans fell victim to the crime in 2009, at a cost of over $54 billion. *(Source: Javelin Strategy & Research. "2010 Identity Fraud Survey Report." February 2010.)*

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the weekly Standard

Reform 'Reform'

In 1955, the historian Richard Hofstadter gave the title *The Age of Reform* to his book on the Populists and Progressives. Somebody really ought to write a sequel. We've been living in another age of reform since at least 1986, when President Reagan and a divided Congress passed a landmark tax bill that closed loopholes while lowering rates. A decade later, President Clinton and a Republican Congress linked welfare benefits to work, and the welfare rolls shrank. These were both major achievements. But the Washington reform machine was just warming up.

Over the last decade, President Bush and a Republican Congress expanded the federal role in education and created a new entitlement to prescription drugs. In March, President Obama and a Democratic Congress overhauled the health care system. In April, Obama said Arizona's "misguided" anti-illegal immigration measure demonstrated the need for "comprehensive immigration reform." Two weeks ago the Senate began considering new, far-reaching financial regulations. When it comes to rule-making, Washington isn't broken. It spits out new reforms at a furious rate.

At some point, though, the meaning of "reform" changed. The tax and welfare bills sought to end free lunches by eliminating special privileges and fostering individual responsibility. But the "reforms" of the last decade have largely been predicated on the idea that you can have something for nothing. The reforms of the last decade, and especially the last year, have given birth to new special privileges. They've increased dependency. They've handed out money the federal government doesn't have.

The tax and welfare bills disrupted the status quo. They left a lot of stakeholders feeling burned. Favored constituencies lobbied to maintain their special privileges. Some businesses said tax reform would make them less competitive. The welfare lobby screamed that work requirements would increase poverty and crime. But all these insiders were wrong. Imaginative thinking and dramatic restructuring worked better than expected.

Today's reforms are different. They don't upset the established order—they codify and embed it. They don't address the underlying problems—they magnify them with perverse incentives.

For example, take the health bill. Three things are behind the dramatic increase in health care costs: an aging population, innovations in medical technology, and a third-party payment system that encourages the consumption of health services. Longer life spans and new treatments are wonderful. But third-party payment is an unfortunate relic from World War II that has distorted health care economics. Does Obamacare address this distortion? Not at all.

Or take "comprehensive immigration reform." During the 2000s, American demand for cheap labor, an unpoliced southern border, lax enforcement of immigration law, corruption and a lack of economic opportunity in Mexico, and the immigrant's understandable desire to better his condition all contributed to a surge in migration to the United States. America, a nation of immigrants, is a welcoming and inclusive place. Immigrants improve economic growth and increase cultural vitality. But the dramatic influx of illegal immigrants has also worsened inequality, depressed wages, and heightened ethnocultural tensions.

President Bush twice attempted to change immigration law by creating a guest worker program and issuing an amnesty. He failed. Obama most likely will fail too, because an enforcement-free amnesty bill only incentivizes further illegal immigration. If Obama were serious about changing these incentives, he'd finish building the border fence and crack down on employers who hire and often exploit illegals because they're cheap, docile, and undocumented. But he doesn't seem eager to do either.

Finally, look at the bank bill. It contains sensible measures, including additional capital requirements and an exchange for complex derivatives. It shines some light on the unregulated shadow banks that made shady bets with money they didn't have. But the bill does not go far enough. The ratings agencies that gave their blessing to trashy mortgage-backed securities go untouched. Freddie and Fannie, who take public money for private profit, go untouched. The big banks, who use their Too Big to Fail status to borrow cheaply and whose political power distorts the system, go untouched.

It's time to reform the concept of reform. It's time to return to the bold initiatives that strip power from insiders and upend the established order. The Kaufman-Brown amendment to break up the big banks would have done just this, so obviously the Senate defeated it. A few other proposals do justice to the idea of reform, in ways ranging from the radical to the incremental, like Paul Ryan's Roadmap for America's Future, Jeffrey Anderson's Small Bill for health care, and Oliver Hart and Luigi Zingales's market-based trigger for the resolution of large and complex financial institutions. If only there were more. The lack of political entrepreneurship these days makes us want to reach for the Xanax.

—*Matthew Continetti*

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Harvard Law vs. Free Inquiry

Dean Martha Minow flunks the test.

BY PETER BERKOWITZ

JASON SEILER

Late last month, controversy erupted at Harvard Law School after a private email written in November was leaked to the law school community. In it, a third year student, clarifying her views after a dinner conversation with two close friends, explained to them that she wanted to understand the science and research on whether intelligence may have a genetic component and whether African Americans may be "less intelligent on a genetic level."

Harvard Law School dean Martha Minow promptly responded by issuing a statement condemning the email and reminding students and faculty that the right to free speech comes with responsibilities. Unfortunately, the dean also reinforced the most common and serious prejudice at American universities today, which targets those who think, or who merely wish to examine critically, nonconforming or disfavored thoughts.

Dean Minow's statement, moreover, failed to honor the scholar's duty to restate accurately a view one is criticizing. According to Minow, the student's email "suggested that black people are genetically inferior to white people." That's an incendiary revision.

What the student actually wrote is that she couldn't "rule out the possibility that African Americans are, on average, genetically predisposed to be less intelligent." Then, in the very next sentence, she entertained the possibility that there is no genetic variation in intelligence between the races: "I could also obviously be convinced that by controlling for the right variables, we would see that they are, in fact, as intelligent as white people under the same circumstances." The student went on to speculate that "cultural differences" are probably "the most important sources of disparate test scores." And the student elaborated at length an argument from Harvard Law School professor Randall Kennedy that in the student's judgment deftly showed, despite the absence of "quantifiable data," that racial disparities for violent crimes were rooted in culture. In sum, the student clearly expressed the desire to set aside conclusions of the heart, and instead examine the scientific data and consider reasoned analysis concerning the genetic basis of intelligence.

Minow's rewriting of the after-dinner email, however, turned the student's competing hypotheses and interest in the scientific evidence into a crude racist claim about people's relative moral worth. Unless, perhaps, Dean Minow assumes that interest in some empirical propositions is inherently racist. Or was it the dean's even more illiberal and antidemocratic assumption that human moral worth is a function of IQ that justified her condemnation of the student?

Furthermore, the dean implicitly encouraged members of the law school community to regard the student as a pariah when she added that "circulation of one student's comment does not reflect the views of the school or the overwhelming majority of the members of this community."

While devoting the longest paragraph of her brief statement to praising the Black Law Students Association for

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the way it handled "the hurt" caused by the email, Minow did not counterbalance her distancing of the law school from the email's student author by offering even a hint of reproach for the gross violation of the student's privacy involved in distributing the email, or a word of caution about the difficulties in interpreting private comments that become fodder for public controversy.

In a statement posted on their website, the Harvard Black Law Students Association echoed Minow's misrepresentation of the student's views, further contending that the student's characterization of African Americans as genetically inferior to white people was "racially inflammatory," "deplorable," and "offensive."

By this time, as Dean Minow noted in her statement, the student had already issued an unequivocal apology: "I am deeply sorry for the pain caused by my email. I never intended to cause any harm, and I am heartbroken and devastated by the harm that has ensued. I would give anything to take it back."

This saga has followed the same dispiriting trajectory as that of the Lawrence Summers affair. In 2005, the then president of Harvard University spoke at a private off-the-record seminar organized by the National Bureau of Economic Research to explore why women, who had made great strides throughout most of higher education, remained significantly underrepresented in sciences and engineering. One of the hypotheses that Summers considered—which he hedged with caveats while insisting that more research was needed—was that fewer women than men were born with the extremely high levels of abstract theoretical intelligence that graduate study of science and engineering requires. Although he explicitly rejected it is as the chief factor, Summers's tentative discussion proved too much for MIT biology professor Nancy Hopkins. She set off a national controversy by walking out of the meeting, informing the *Boston Globe* that if she hadn't, "I would've either blacked out or thrown up," and suggesting that Summers had argued that women were genetically inferior to men.

The controversy presented Summers with an opportunity to instruct Harvard and the larger public about the university's proper mission. He might have begun by pointing out that he had participated in the meeting because of his devotion to equal treatment for women and had argued that the most important factor explaining women's underrepresentation in the sciences is probably that many young women with the requisite intellectual gifts rationally choose to go into law, business, or medicine, which allows them to establish careers and begin families in much less time than in the sciences. And he should have concentrated on arguing that it is the special task of the university to expose a range of hypotheses, including unpopular ones, to rigorous analysis.

Instead, Summers issued one groveling apology after another, endorsing his critics' view that his remarks were false and insensitive. This was to no avail. He lost a no-confidence vote in the faculty of arts and sciences and within a year was ousted from Harvard's presidency.

It is not to be expected that a third-year law student, publicly accused by her dean of making hurtful, racist comments, would step up to defend herself in light of the university's proper mission. But it is to be lamented that Dean Minow, who sought to turn the controversy into a teachable moment, taught the wrong lesson.

For Minow, the lesson is that members of the university community must learn to be more sensitive. For fear of offending each other and causing hurt, students and faculty must not mention, even in private correspondence, a proposition that "resonates with old and hurtful misconceptions," even if the proposition itself—concerning the biological basis of intelligence—can be proven false through empirical investigation. This, though, is an intellectually stultifying obligation. In a complicated world, everything resonates with everything.

Contrary to Dean Minow, our students and faculty need to learn to be less sensitive. Instead, they need to develop the virtues of toleration and intellectual humility. The cultivation of sensitivity sharpens antennae for hurtful words and ideas, and encourages complaining whenever they sting. In contrast, toleration, particularly at universities, means suffering with equanimity the expression of disagreeable, even odious, opinions, provided that they are subject to reasoned analysis. The cultivation of humility fosters respect for others and their opinions and a willingness to follow logic, evidence, and experience—to consider that one might be wrong and to find in others' errors the occasion for improving one's own understanding.

The question of race and IQ is explosive. It has an ugly history, and it has been tied to cruel injustice. But the nefarious use of opinions about the biological basis of intelligence is no reason to denounce a student who advocates submitting competing claims to systematic inquiry.

In her statement to the Harvard Law School community, Dean Minow ought to have proclaimed that free speech on campus is very broad, that it is rooted in the freedom and equality of all human beings, and that its purpose is to protect the robust examination of ideas, including controversial ones, in order that the truth may emerge. She ought to have reminded students and faculty who cherish free inquiry that it is their responsibility to confront views that they deplore with better evidence and stronger arguments.

If Dean Minow's principle that hurtful opinions must go unspoken and unexamined were taken seriously and applied impartially, then law schools and universities would be obliged to close down the dispassionate investigation of an enormous range of important public issues, from the morality, law, and politics of abortion, affirmative action, and same-sex marriage to the causes of the financial crisis; from the efficiency and justice of health care reform to the rules governing the detention, interrogation, and prosecution of enemy combatants; from Middle East politics to immigration.

And that's no way to run a law school or a university. ♦

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How to Pay Down the Debt

Economic growth is the best bet.

BY JAMES PETHOKOUKIS

A death panel for the national debt? Please. Even members of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform seriously doubt whether they can construct a "grand compromise" on taxes and spending. America isn't Greece (yet). Not enough sense of impending doom. President Barack Obama's bipartisan, all-star team of budget hawks might have to settle for merely educating Americans on the financial black hole slowly enveloping the U.S. economy.

Yet before newspaper editorial pages predictably bemoan a "broken Washington" where Democrats won't reform entitlements and Republicans won't embrace a value-added tax, they should consider this: The "slash and tax" approach has a poor record of success globally. Since 1980, some 30 debt-plagued nations have tried to reduce their indebtedness through such austerity measures. In practically all cases, according to a new study by financial giant UBS, the increase in national debt was only slowed, not reversed, by such policy pain.

Then again, broad tax increases on the middle class and snipping the safety net like a bonsai tree aren't the only possible fixes out there—despite being the preferred ones of elite Washington. There are other options:

CONFISCATE. Talking about Wall Street, Obama recently said, "I do think at a certain point you've made enough money." Is it that far a leap to "I do think at a certain point you've accumulated enough wealth"? It actually seems like a natural outgrowth of moaning on the left about rising inequality. Various European nations already tax wealth in addition to income. So does the United States via property and estate taxes. But some liberals want to implement a pervasive, European-style system where the total net wealth of, say, the top one percent of taxpayers would annually be taxed a percentage point or two . . . or three. Paper gains on a stock portfolio, for instance, would be treated as realized gains every year. A wealth tax on America's Buffetts and Bloombergs could theoretically raise $100 billion to $300 billion a year.

But why stop with the super-rich? Desperately indebted nations make desperate moves. In 2008, Argentina's government seized control of its $30 billion private pension system. Think it couldn't happen here? Well, Teresa Ghilarducci, a professor at the New School of Social Research, wants to turn the $3 trillion 401(k) system into a kind of enhanced Social Security plan, with mandatory contributions, run by Washington. Her ideas have been warmly received on Capitol Hill by Democrats—including Jim McDermott of the House Ways and Means Committee—and received favorable mention in a recent report from the White House's middle-class task force run by Vice President Joe Biden. Ghilarducci's plan targets a tempting pool of accumulated wealth for the government to tap in some future U.S. sovereign debt crisis. Unlikely? Perhaps—but no more so than sinking hundreds of billions of taxpayer dough into troubled banks.

INFLATE. When emerging economies start to submerge, they often default. But when you own the printing presses for the global reserve currency, default really isn't necessary. Boost inflation and repay the debt in cheaper dollars over a long period of time. It's worked before, if only unintentionally. The fiscal cost of World War II more than doubled the U.S debt-to-GDP ratio to 121 percent in 1946. But by 1980, it was just 33 percent. Of that decline, UBS estimates, 60 percent came from inflation, thanks to a three-year surge in prices right after the war and the runaway inflation of the late 1960s and 1970s.

Right now, the U.S debt-to-GDP ratio of 63 percent is expected to rise to 90 percent by 2020, according to the conservative forecasts of the Congressional Budget Office. Simply to keep that ratio steady at current levels, inflation would have to average 5 percent a year for the next decade. And as it turns out, that is just what the International Monetary Fund is suggesting high-debt nations around the world think about doing. The current Federal Reserve chairman, Ben Bernanke, probably has little interest in seeing the central bank squander its hard-earned credibility as an inflation fighter. But note that the likely incoming Fed vice-chair and possible Bernanke replacement, Janet Yellen, is considered an inflation dove and might be more receptive to the idea.

CREATE (WEALTH). Current spending policies, especially on health care, will create budget deficits so huge that creditors would surely stop lending long before any worst-case scenarios happen. But what might a worst-case scenario look like? As the CBO forecasts it, America's debt-to-GDP ratio could top 700 percent by 2080 (an almost unthinkable level; basket case Zimbabwe is a world's worst 300 percent right now). But drill down into that prediction and you find that the CBO has plugged in a rather dismal long-term forecast of U.S. economic growth, just 2 percent or so. That's only two-thirds of the average U.S. growth rate since 1970. But what if (a) government spending tracks

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current projections over the next 70 years, (b) government revenue as a percentage of GDP stays at its historic average of 18 percent, and (c) the economy were somehow to grow a bit faster than its 20th-century average, about 3.5 percent. Under those conditions, according a recent study by JPMorgan Chase, a much wealthier America (generating $100 trillion in tax revenue rather than $50 trillion) would be able to afford projected spending without raising taxes. The long-term budget gap would vanish.

So what's the best mix of options? Well, the Obama deficit panel might want to take a peek at a 2009 study by Harvard University's Alberto Alesina and Silvia Ardagna. It examined 40 years of debt reduction plans by advanced economies and found that "those based upon spending cuts and no tax increases are more likely to reduce deficits and debt over GDP ratios than those based upon tax increases." They're also associated with higher economic growth. But spending cuts alone are probably not enough. The budget-cutting Roadmap for America's Future of Representative Paul Ryan, the Wisconsin Republican, intelligently cuts future social insurance benefits as a share of the economy and partially shifts Americans into private retirement and health care plans. So far, so good. But the Ryan plan would take seven long decades to restore American indebtedness to pre-financial crisis levels.

So reduced spending needs a policy partner. Wealth taxes would only drive the wealthy and their portfolios to overseas tax havens. And the infamous "bond market vigilantes" would eventually catch up to the inflationistas when the United States tried to roll over trillions in shorter-term Treasuries. (Think Lehman and Bear Stearns when their short-term funding dried up.) That leaves the growth option. Indeed, that is typically how successful countries in the UBS study managed to get their books in order; they grew their economies faster than they added debt. Faster growth would also accelerate the dividends from the Ryan plan since his blueprint cautiously uses the slow-growth CBO estimate.

Easier said than done, of course. The Econ 101 way to boost growth is by having more workers becoming ever more productive. With the growth in the U.S. labor force likely to slow in coming years, workers and companies will need to get even more innovative. And there is no one policy to help make that happen. It will take a full-spectrum effort: lower taxes on companies and capital, pork-free spending on infrastructure and basic research (beyond health care), an education system that teaches students rather than feathering the nests of teachers' unions. Every aspect of U.S. public policy will need to be optimized for economic growth. Now *that* sounds like a worthy subject for a Washington commission. ♦

Free Enterprise & the States

By Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

To create the 20 million jobs needed this decade to put unemployed Americans back to work and keep up with a growing population, entrepreneurs and businesses large and small—not government—must lead the way. Businesses create almost all new jobs, but their ability to do so is impacted by government rules and regulations. So if the government really wants to help, it can start by passing policies that create an environment in which businesses can succeed.

All too often that kind of leadership and common sense isn't coming from Washington. But as we learned last week when six governors—three Democrats and three Republicans—convened for a summit at the U.S. Chamber, state governments are taking a more business-friendly approach.

In conjunction with the summit, the National Chamber Foundation (NCF) released a study that found that states pursuing a course guided by free enterprise principles fare better economically than those that don't. By embracing many of the strategies at the core of our free enterprise system—competitive tax rates, open trade, and commonsense regulation—states are helping to jumpstart our economic recovery and create more jobs.

What do economically vibrant states do, according to the NCF study? They set the right policies, get out of the way, and let businesses do what they do best—serve customers, create jobs, and help the community. These states keep taxes low. They make targeted investments in infrastructure projects and create growth-friendly environments in communities. They work hard to attract science- and technology-based companies that will generate the jobs of tomorrow. They help companies both large and small export. They cultivate human talent through workforce development and strong schools.

In short, these states embrace the free enterprise economic principles that have made the United States the most prosperous society in human history. It's a simple formula—let businesses be innovative, keep interference in commercial activities to a minimum, and provide the economic infrastructure necessary for growth. Congress, are you paying attention?

Those who look to Washington to solve our economic problems will be sorely disappointed. Our recovery will come from the bottom up, not the top down. State governments, by residing closer to the people they serve, are uniquely positioned to implement the commonsense policies needed to harness the creativity and passion of the American people. The model for success exists, we just need to use it.

To watch video from the governors summit and to read NCF's report on *Enterprising States*, visit www.FreeEnterprise.com/governors.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Comment at www.chamberpost.com.

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He's No Henry Clay

The president's aversion to compromise.

BY FRED BARNES

"I go for honorable compromise whenever it can be made. Life itself is but a compromise between death and life, the struggle continuing throughout our whole existence. . . . All legislation, all government, all society, is formed upon the principle of mutual concession, politeness, comity, courtesy; upon these, everything is based."

Those are not the words of President Obama, though he would have you believe they express a sentiment he personifies. Rather, they come from a Senate debate in 1850 and were spoken by Henry Clay, known then and now as the Great Compromiser.

Clay authored the three greatest compromises in American history, two limiting the spread of slavery outside the South (1820, 1850) and one on tariffs (1833). Obama has talked about compromise, but has neither sought nor produced a single one.

Obama has succumbed to the temptation of large majorities. The lopsided Democratic margins—59-41 in the Senate, 254-177 (four vacancies) in the House—allowed him to win approval of his health care plan without making a single meaningful concession to Republicans. And he's pursuing a partisan, no-compromise strategy with his remaining initiatives this year.

This approach is politically risky. On health care, Obama not only spurned Republicans, but also defied public opinion. By compromising, he surely would have wound up with a more popular bill. As it is, Obamacare is the target of a drive to repeal it. Repeal now outpolls the bill itself, 54 to 38 percent.

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When threatened with defeat on the economic stimulus package last year, Obama's tactic was to peel off just enough Sentate Republicans—three, it turned out—to win approval. This is not the same as reaching a compromise, and the stimulus isn't regarded as even faintly bipartisan. It soon lost favor with the public.

Obama has succumbed to the temptation of large majorities. The lopsided Democratic margins in Congress have allowed him to avoid meaningful concessions to Republicans.

With the financial reform currently being debated in the Senate, Obama pushed for passage without compromise—until every Republican and one Democrat blocked his way with a successful filibuster. This forced Obama and Democrats to yield ground to Republicans. But the current legislation is still a long way from being what could fairly be called a compromise.

It's true that compromise is not always feasible in politics. It may not have been on health care because Obama and Republicans had different goals. The president wanted (and got) a measure that vastly expands the federal government's control over the health care system. Republicans preferred to roll back government and give individuals control over their own care.

But Obamacare was an exception. When the two sides of a debate share the same goals but differ on the means of achieving them, a compromise along the lines enunciated by Clay is quite possible. His formula remains as relevant as it was in 1850.

For a compromise to work, Clay said it must be win-win. "Each side must feel that it gained something that is essential to its interest as a result of the compromise," writes historian Robert Remini in his new book *At the Edge of the Precipice: Henry Clay and the Compromise that Saved the Union*.

This principle could be applied to financial reform. Republicans want to prevent any further bailouts of financial institutions "too big to fail." Democrats are bent on increasing Washington's role in regulating Wall Street. These goals are not mutually exclusive.

Nor are the goals of the two sides on immigration reform and cap and trade. Republicans insist that steps—such as erecting hundreds of more miles of fence—to secure the southern border must come first. The top Democratic priority is a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants already in this country. The two are compatible.

Cap and trade legislation aims to reduce our reliance on unfriendly countries for oil and to curb greenhouse gases. Democrats want to do this through increased government intervention in energy markets and the economy. Republicans—a good number of them anyway—would prefer a carbon tax that could achieve both goals without either a bigger government role or a powerful, new bureaucracy in Washington. These goals don't conflict.

Obama's mistake, and it's a major one, is not understanding the value of compromise, both for him and the country. By relying solely on Democratic majorities, he's caused his popularity to collapse and jeopardized passage of his agenda. Clay knew better. "Many men who are very wise in their own estimation . . . will reject all propositions of compromise, but that is no reason why a compromise should not be attempted to be made," he said. I'm not sure which men "wise in their own estimation" Clay had in mind. But if he were around today, we'd recognize the target of his advice instantly, wouldn't we? ♦

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Iran Outplays Obama at the U.N.

The diplomatic gang that couldn't shoot straight.

BY MICHAEL ANTON

Watching foreign diplomats run circles around America's striped pants set is always a depressing spectacle. In recent days we've been treated to some doozies—for instance, Iran being elected to the U.N.'s Commission on the Status of Women when our own (female) U.N. ambassador didn't show up for the vote.

But that is nothing compared to what is going on down the hall at the Review Conference of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Held every five years, the conference is supposed to identify gaps in the treaty's implementation and suggest fixes. Everyone knows what the gaps are. Indeed, for all practical purposes, there is only one, a loophole so wide you could steam a nuclear-powered submarine through it.

The treaty not only explicitly allows countries to master technology that could be used either to generate power or build weapons, it obligates nuclear-savvy nations to help the nuclear neophytes develop that technology. Hence a duplicitous country can, aided by other parties to the NPT, do virtually everything necessary for building a nuclear weapon and, so long as it refrains from taking the final few steps, remain in full compliance with the NPT—and then withdraw at the last minute and build nukes. Which is exactly what North Korea did and what Iran is on the verge of doing.

Seems like a big problem, no? The Bush administration recognized it as such and at the last conference in 2005 proposed a series of steps that would have gone a long way toward closing this loophole. Unsurprisingly, none were adopted. As President Obama's nuclear czar Gary Samore has accurately noted, fixing the NPT is "harder than changing the U.S. Constitution." Diplomats in other countries are not fools. They know how good they have it under the current terms of the treaty and are in no rush to alter a single word.

Thus the Obama administration has understandably shown up for the current conference without an ambitious reform agenda in hand. Rather, officials intended to put the focus, justifiably, on Tehran. "This meeting is all about Iran," one White House official said. "We're not going to permit Iran to try to change the story from their failure to comply," Secretary of State Clinton declared.

In a very narrow sense, her words have been vindicated. Iran hasn't changed the story—leaving aside the fiery, defiant Monday speech by Iranian strongman Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. But Iran didn't have to do anything. Egypt did the dirty work on Tehran's behalf. And the Obama administration went along with it.

To understand what happened, it's necessary to take a brief excursion back to the salad days of the mid-1990s—the decade that George F. Will described, on September 12, 2001, as America's "holiday from history." The NPT was set to expire in 1995. President Bill Clinton desperately wanted an extension. In order to get it, he needed buy-in from the "non-aligned" movement states, and in particular from the Arabs. Hence he pledged that the United States would back a resolution calling for a "weapons of mass destruction-free zone" in the Middle East.

If this sounds like a gesture packed with many of the worst trademarks of Clintonism—devoid of substance, unenforceable, pleasant sounding, impeccably uncontroversial (who could be *for* WMD?), oblivious to practical realities, at once utopian and banal—that's because it was.

But it was more than that. It was also an attempt by Arab states to put pressure on the only nuclear power in the region—Israel. Clinton went along in all likelihood because he calculated that the gesture's very emptiness posed no real threat to Israeli security. If so, he would have been only partly correct.

It's true that the resolution had no effect on Israel's military posture and no power to change anything. However, for a state that routinely absorbs many multiples of its fair share of diplomatic blows, further isolation of this kind is not trivial, especially when that isolation is abetted by its only real ally. Worse, the resolution went beyond moral equivalence and into outright blame, implicitly fingering Israel—a tiny country under constant threat of annihilation, almost destroyed at least three times by neighboring armies in its short existence—as the bad guy in the Middle East's WMD story. In the main, though, Clinton was right: Nothing really came of it and the whole episode was soon forgotten. There things lay for 15 years. Until this week.

As its opening gambit at the current NPT conference, Egypt revived the idea and convinced the five permanent members of the Security Council—including the United States—to issue a joint statement reiterating their support for the earlier resolution. *Voilà!* Rather than the conference being, in the White House's words, "all about Iran," suddenly it was once again all about the U.N.'s traditional bogeyman.

Israel, of course, is not going to unilaterally disarm, no matter what this or any other resolution says. Perhaps if Tehran reversed course on its nuclear program and the other Arab

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states formally recognized Israel some modest progress could begin.

If anything, by giving diplomatic cover to Tehran, this move actually solidifies Israeli determination and raises Israeli suspicion. Whatever one thinks about the original Israeli rationale for going nuclear, it's impossible not to sympathize with and understand Jerusalem's fear of a nuclear Iran. We are constantly assured that the Sunni Arab states privately fear a Shia Persian bomb as much as or more than the Jewish state does. After watching this latest maneuver from one of the two leading Sunni Arab states, Jerusalem can be forgiven for wondering how seriously to take that bit of conventional wisdom. One Israeli official did his best to put a positive spin on the development. The Egyptians, he said, "know Iran is the problem, but they feel they can't support a campaign against Iran without also putting pressure on Israel." Or maybe as much as they distrust Iran, ancient hatred for Israel trumps all.

Right now, plans for implementation are in the early stages and include a possible future conference dedicated solely to this issue and the appointment of a U.N. "special coordinator"—both measures that would accomplish nothing practical but would very efficiently keep the focus and the headlines where they least belong. Which is of course the whole point.

What might have been excused as an empty gesture in 1995 is a dangerous diplomatic mistake in 2010. This time there really is a nuclear threat to the security of the Middle East, to U.S. allies and forces, and (not incidentally) to the credibility of the Nonproliferation Treaty—and it comes from Tehran, not Jerusalem. Changing the focus of the conference from one to the other was a diplomatic masterstroke on Cairo's part but a disaster for American interests. The Obama administration has amply demonstrated that it will take not one step beyond "diplomacy" in any effort to stop an Iranian bomb. If this is what Obama diplomacy looks like, we are stepping backward. ♦

The Depopulation of Greenland

Will the last one to leave turn out the Northern lights? BY JONATHAN V. LAST

A few weeks ago, Palle Christiansen, Greenland's minister of finance warned that his country was facing an existential threat from immigration. Yet unlike the far-right politicians of Europe who take up this theme, Christiansen was not fretting over foreigners coming to his country's shores, but about fellow citizens leaving.

For the past three decades, Greenland has been growing increasingly prosperous and inching away from its colonial sovereign, Denmark, toward full independence. But prosperity has also led more and more educated young Greenlanders to take up opportunities elsewhere. Greenland's encounter with globalization is a case study in how unpredictable the forces of modernity can be. On the one hand, globalization offers the tantalizing prospect that Greenland will soon be able to afford independence. On the other hand, it presents the unsettling possibility that Greenland as it has existed for the last century will simply cease to be.

To understand Greenland's uncertain future, you have to understand its past. Greenland was rediscovered by Europe when Hans Egede, a Norwegian missionary, came ashore in 1721 and began living with the native Inuit peoples. Norway passed its claim on the island to Denmark, which, because Greenland had little to offer of economic or strategic value, remained something of an absentee colonial power. The Royal Greenland Trading Company, Denmark's state-controlled proxy, rarely turned a profit. For the Danish crown, Greenland was a minor expense worth keeping for purposes of imperial prestige.

When Denmark was occupied by the Germans in 1940, the United States agreed to protect Greenland in exchange for basing rights on the island. (In 1946, Secretary of State James Byrnes suggested that America ought to purchase it outright.) Through all this time Greenland had remained mainly undeveloped. With only a handful of villages of more than 1,000 people, Greenlanders mostly lived rustic lives. Hunting and fishing were the primary economic activities. In 1966, Greenland had a population of 41,000 and a total of 1,500 motorized vehicles (cars, trucks, motorcycles, fire engines, buses, etc.).

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, a movement for independence took hold among Greenlanders. It was a reaction to Denmark's attempt to join the European Economic Community, the forerunner of the European Union. Worried that the EEC treaty would grant other countries access to their fishing grounds, Greenlanders voted against joining the EEC in 1972 even as the rest of Denmark voted for it. Seven years later, in 1979, Greenland was given its first taste of self-government, and its first significant decision, in 1984, was to leave the EEC.

In 2008, Greenlanders voted overwhelmingly to assume home rule. They created their own parliament and took control of domestic politics and their budget. The island's only residual tie to Denmark is foreign policy. And money: the Danes send their wards an annual subsidy of $660 million—roughly $11,000 per Greenlander.

Greenland's theory of independence is based on the idea that one

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day this allowance will be unnecessary. The island has extensive mineral reserves, which are just beginning to be tapped. An assortment of international conglomerates are prospecting for platinum, gold, copper, iron, and nickel. In 2005 a Swedish company established an olivine mine. A Canadian firm is building a $1 billion molybdenum mine on the eastern half of the island while an Australian outfit is considering a lead-zinc mine in the north. Alcoa is planning an aluminum smelting operation on the west coast. All told, the Greenlandic Bureau of Minerals and Petroleum expects seven mines to open by 2015, creating 1,500 jobs. The island could be financially self-sufficient in five years.

And then there are the oil prospects. If offshore oil is found—the U.S. Geological Survey estimates there are some 31.4 billion barrels off the northeast shore—Greenland could become very rich, very fast. The country's Raw Minerals Directorate says that a single oil strike would likely generate about $1.9 billion a year in revenue.

So Greenland seems headed for complete independence. The question for people like Christiansen is whether there will be any Greenlanders left to enjoy it.

Greenland is, of course, a misnomer: Whatever the country's charms, it is still a rock mostly covered with ice. In the largest town, Nuuk, the mean temperature in December is 17° Fahrenheit; in July, it's 46 degrees.

Greenland has always had more people going than coming. In the past, tribal ties were enough to keep Greenlanders in Greenland. But globalization has made emigration easier and more attractive.

In 2001, Greenland had a net emigration of minus 247. Since then, the numbers have been creeping upward. A net of 448 people left in 2005; 644 people in 2006; 566 people in 2007; 638 people in 2008. Those numbers may look small, but keep in mind that as of January 2009, Greenland was home to just 56,194 people. And understand that this slow drip means that 13,482 Greenlanders—just about a quarter of the country's population—now live abroad.

What's particularly worrisome is that the largest numbers of emigrants are 15- to 25-year-olds. Lars Petersen of Statistics Greenland explains that a third of the country's emigrants name education as the reason they leave and that half of the Greenlanders who go to university abroad do not return.

Losing people in such numbers is bad enough, but losing young adults in their prime childbearing years will depress the country's fertility rate down the road. Greenland's fertility rate is healthy enough right now—2.3, which is above replacement—but they are on the downslope of a baby boom: In 1991, Greenland had just over 1,200 live births, and since then the number of babies being born annually has trended downward. In 2007, just over 800 babies were born. The emigration and falling birth rate add up to a shrinking population.

Then there's Greenland's suicide rate. In 1950, suicide was almost nonexistent on the island—there were two suicides in 1960; one study put the average rate near 0.3 suicides per 100,000 people. In the rare instances where suicide did occur, it was among the elderly. But beginning in 1970 the suicide rate increased dramatically, peaking in the early 1990s at 107 suicides per 100,000 people. (Nearly all of the suicides were among teens and young adults, making their losses even more consequential in terms of population decline.) Today Greenland's suicide rate—it's now 100 per 100,000—is the highest in the world. No other country—not Japan or Belarus or Kazakhstan—has a rate even half that. These individual tragedies constitute a broader societal tragedy. Suicide is, after all, emigration by other means.

Greenland representative Juliane Henningsen hands out 'self rule' bracelets in Nuuk.

AP / LEIF OSEFSEN

Population decline has brought with it all sorts of practical problems. Since 1970, the country has become steadily more urbanized as Greenlanders relocated from the outer settlements to the towns, primarily Nuuk (pop: 15,105), Sisimiut (pop:

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5,458), and Ilulissat (pop: 4,528). Only about 9,000 Greenlanders still live in settlements, and the government has made noise recently about relocating citizens in hamlets with fewer than 100 people.

The labor market in Greenland isn't especially tight, but the country often has trouble filling skilled positions. Doctors and nurses, for instance, are in very short supply and one in every four health-sector positions is vacant. There was talk last year about Greenland "renting" doctors and nurses from Iceland.

The subject of guest workers is particularly delicate. Last year, then-prime minister Hans Enoksen said that Greenland hoped for "a quick takeover of the responsibility for immigration and for immigration legislation [from Denmark]." "We want to do this," he said, "because we expect a major labor shortage. For this reason we will welcome foreigners who want to work in this country." But Greenlanders understand that even a small number of foreigners would have the demographic weight to change their society. As Charles Emmerson reports in *The Future History of the Arctic* (2010), "Many Greenlanders are keen to change voting rights to ensure that workers brought in for just a few years will not be able to vote in Greenland's elections."

There is already a cultural tension between Inuit Greenlanders and Greenlanders of Danish descent. In 1950, Denmark embarked on an initiative to modernize Greenland. *Sermitsiaq*, Greenland's main newspaper, explains, "That year represented a landmark social change for Greenland as it launched its transformation into a welfare state backed by Danish resettlement and modern aid." From 1950 to 1970, Danes came to Greenland in large numbers.

As the Danes moved in, they built up the native government bureaucracy, from schools to state services. By 1962, 45 percent of Greenlanders were state employees. Greenlandic became the official language of Greenland in 2008, but Danish is still prevalent. Schools, for instance, still operate primarily in Danish. Last year there was a commotion when one of the political parties put forward a bill requiring that only Greenlandic be spoken on the parliament floor. Because 4 of the 31 elected representatives speak only Danish, the bill was quickly withdrawn.

An endangered language, a declining population, and mass emigration. A suicide epidemic that began the instant European modernity was introduced. You can see why ministers are concerned.

Greenland has a growing economy and the prospect of political independence. It also faces a real chance that its people will bolt for the exits in such numbers as to make the prosperity meaningless and full nationhood unworkable. Their experience is a reminder that the effects of globalization can be as unpredictable as they are profound. ♦

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The Convert Conundrum

The long parade of worldly believers.

BY MARY EBERSTADT

We interrupt the latest bilious rants about religion with a respectful bulletin. Mid-April marked the passing of British philosopher Antony Flew, perhaps the most famous atheist-turned-theist of recent times. It's a moment that seems especially worth reflecting on these days, as the West's media-intoxicated celebrity atheists lunge once again for the wheel of public debate.

A scourge of believers for much of his life, Flew penned numerous works attacking theism over the years, including one of the most famous atheist tracts of the 20th century ("Theology and Falsification"). Yet over 50 years later, via the straightforwardly entitled book *There Is a God*, he announced to the world that he'd changed his mind and become a deist, albeit one who still rejected the specifically Christian conception of God. Research on DNA, Flew submitted, "has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce (life), that intelligence must have been involved."

Retaliation was swift—one might even say Darwinian. The same enforcers now dangling handcuffs at Pope Benedict leapt to deride Flew for his newfound belief, insinuating odiously here and there that the philosopher had simply lost his mind. Beneath the grandstanding, though, these former atheist allies also betrayed a distinct uneasiness about *l'affaire Flew*—and understandably so. For quirky though that late nod to deism may have appeared, Flew's story is nevertheless emblematic of a tradition far deeper and more interesting than today's increasingly hysterical baiting of believers.

That is the long, rich, and multidimensional history of individual conversion to some form of belief—and not only by those "poor, uneducated, and easy to command," as a *Washington Post* reporter once described rank and file believers. In addition to the impoverished illiterates—among whom conversion stories abound—there is what might be called the convert elite: the long parade of educated and worldly men and women, beginning back with one called Saul and continuing on to the 21st century, who have deliberately, often seemingly inexplicably, signed on to wearing the Christian label.

It's a history all the more remarkable given the liabilities that such a turnaround often guarantees. In many of the best places, after all, the surest route to laughingstock status is declaring oneself a believer. And yet the parade into Christianity continues, including with high-profile conversions and a slew of recent books offering testimonials (*Chosen*, *A Century of Catholic Converts*, *Women in Search of Truth*, and Joseph Pearce's *Literary Converts* among them). Why?

For some, the answer appears to be personal epiphany—though not all experience it quite so dramatically as Paul. Whittaker Chambers, for example—one of the more notorious converts of his own day—reported that it was in studying the ear of his infant daughter that "the finger of God was first laid upon my forehead." Sir Alec Guinness, one of many in the venerable tradition of English converts to Rome, had one of the more unusual wake-up calls; it came to him as he was playing Father Brown, the detective in the G.K. Chesterton series.

Other converts apparently find faith another way—via a search for intellectual communion with some of the great minds of history. The 2009 collection *Chosen*, which presents the personal stories of 23 Catholic converts, offers several examples. Some, like anthropologist Steven Mosher, cite the powerful effect of reading Thomas Aquinas (followed up, in Mosher's case, by witnessing a forced abortion in China). Convert Austin Ruse, now a prominent Catholic activist, reports that his own search began as a rebellion against the easy disdain of his professors toward "the thing that has occupied the greatest minds of all time"—only to find his own search for that same thing ending in Rome.

And still others opt for faith precisely *because* of the teachings that today's atheists along with many secular people find most risible. Malcolm Muggeridge, for example, who toyed with the idea of converting for much of his life, cited finally "the Catholic Church's firm stand against contraception and abortion." Other converts, shocking though it might seem in these secular times, evidently agree. In recent weeks came another prominent convert: Hadley Arkes, professor of jurisprudence at Amherst and a leading figure in the pro-life movement, who cited his conviction of the Church as a "truth-telling institution."

The question of why so many thinking people cross the convert Rubicon even now—or perhaps *especially* now—is just one of the many imponderables raised by even a brief consideration of religious conversion stories. It also reminds us that there is more on heaven and earth than is dreamed of in the philosophy of our celebrity Christian-bashers—as the departed Antony Flew, however belatedly and with whatever qualifications, would roundly have agreed. ♦

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The Taliban in My Inbox

Eight hours after the failed bombing, an email arrived claiming 'responsibility of recent Attack on Times Square Newyork USA.'

By Bill Roggio

Early Sunday morning, May 2, I awoke and followed my usual routine: Grabbed a cup of coffee, logged onto my computer, scanned the news for major developments in the war, and checked my email. It was no ordinary morning, though, as the evening before someone had attempted to set off a car bomb in Times Square in New York City.

Normally I have a couple of dozen messages in my inbox: notes from readers, an occasional tip or link to a news story, and some spam. But something I found sitting in my inbox that morning made me catch my breath: an email from someone claiming to be a representative of the Pakistani Taliban, who was notifying me that one of their top leaders had released a tape claiming responsibility for the attempt to murder U.S. citizens in Times Square.

The email had been sent at 2:37 A.M., just eight hours after the bomb was discovered. The emailer's handle was Taliban News and the subject line read: "Qari Hussain Mehsud from Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan accepts the responsibility of recent Attack on Times Square Newyork USA."

"You're the first one to know" the cryptic email stated.

The email included a link to a 1:21-length video posted on a YouTube site called the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan News Channel. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan ("the Movement of the Taliban in Pakistan") is an al Qaeda-linked group waging war against the Pakistani state and against NATO forces in Afghanistan.

"We Tehreek-e-Taliban with all the Pride and Bravery, TAKE full responsibility for the RECENT ATTACK IN THE USA," Qari Hussain states at the beginning of the tape, which was accompanied by English subtitles.

"This attack is a revenge for the great & valuable martyred leaders of mujahideen," he goes on, while images of recently slain Taliban and al Qaeda leaders appear. He listed Baitullah Mehsud, the leader of the Pakistani Taliban, who was killed in a Predator strike in August 2009 and Abu Omar al Baghdadi, the leader of al Qaeda's Islamic State of Iraq who was killed by Iraqi forces in mid-April of this year. An image of Abu Ayyub al Masri, Al Qaeda in Iraq's leader, who was killed with Baghdadi in April, also flashed on the screen.

Faisal Shahzad's Nissan Pathfinder on 45th Street, May 1

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In the tape, Qari Hussain threatens further attacks in the United States. He warns U.S. allies "to oppose the evil US policies" and apologize for actions in the Middle East and South Asia, or "otherwise be prepared for the worst ever destruction and devastation in their regions."

My first thought was that it was a hoax. Yet it certainly looked authentic. The tape was produced by Umar Studio, the propaganda arm of the Pakistani Taliban. There were no reports of the Taliban claiming credit for the failed attack anywhere in the news, and so I immediately contacted law enforcement authorities and provided the emails. But I also

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contacted sources in an attempt to confirm the video and was told it was authentic—the speaker was indeed Qari Hussain Mehsud, the Taliban's master trainer of child suicide bombers.

During the 12 hours following the failed bombing, officials had been downplaying or denying the possibility of foreign links and speculating that the plot had been carried out by a domestic group or a deranged individual. At 10:24 A.M. eastern time, an article about the email, accompanied by the embedded video, was up at my website, the *Long War Journal*.

Within two hours, YouTube had pulled the video down and shuttered the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan News Channel, presumably at the request of the U.S. government.

At 8:33 P.M., that night, I received another email, this one from a person identifying himself as a Taliban representative. He said he had two tapes of Hakeemullah Mehsud that proved he was alive and showed him threatening further attacks in the United States.

The email address was different from the previous one; the handle this time was Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. The subject header read: "Hakeemullah Mehsud is Alive and Healthy and Delivering news about Attacks on USA." Yet it was clear that the same person was emailing me, as he referred to the prior email in the text: "you're again the first one to see it. share it with as many as you can. I appreciate your site, only few things are confusing to you, rest is clear."

The email contained links to video and audio recordings of Hakeemullah, the overall leader of the Pakistani Taliban. They were posted to a YouTube site called TehreekeTaliban. The email also contained a link to the same video of Qari Hussain that had been removed by YouTube earlier in the day and was now re-posted—it has since been removed again.

The Taliban member had sent me the email even as he was uploading the files. His message read: "this last file is still in process, youtube will take some minutes to finish it." I received the email quickly enough to notice that the last file, which was the longer 8:42 video of Hakeemullah, was not yet available.

The fact that this was a video of Hakeemullah was

From: Taliban News
Date: Sun, May 2, 2010 at 2:37 AM
Subject: Qari Hussain Mehsud from Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan accepts the responsibility of recent Attack on Times Square Newyork USA
To: Bill Roggio

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxgTdkoM0Bw

You're the first one to know

From: Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan
Date: Sun, May 2, 2010 at 8:33 PM
Subject: Hakeemullah Mehsud is Alive and Healthy and Delivering news about Attacks on USA
To: Bill Roggio

hi

you're again the first one to see it

share it with as many as you can

I appreciate your site, only few things are confusing to you, rest is clear

Hakeemullah Mehsud is Alive and Healthy and Delivering news about Attacks on USA <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HL4F7PvipyA>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HL4F7PvipyA

Qari Hussain Mehsud from Tehreek-e-Taliban accepts the responsibility of Attack on Times Square <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vC01ksQ1fWk>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vC01ksQ1fWk

Hakeemullah Mehsud Ameer Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan is Alive and Healthy and Delivering news about Attacks on USA Detailed Version <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_yvOyfs4XFI>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_yvOyfs4XFI

this last file is still in process, youtube will take some minutes to finish it

Two emails were sent to the author linking the failed bombing to Taliban groups in Pakistan. The linked video clip, in which Taliban leader Qari Hussain Mehsud lauded the attack, was uploaded the day before Faisal Shahzad's trip to Times Square.

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news. Most students of the Taliban thought he was dead. Hakeemullah had been the target of a Predator strike in North Waziristan on January 14, and top Pakistani and U.S. officials had written him off as dead. I've been one of the few voices disputing that claim, noting the major inconsistencies in the reports of Hakeemullah's death. (He was reported dead on three separate occasions after the January 14 strike, and the accounts all conflict.)

So, here was audio and video of Hakeemullah proving he was alive (he mentions dates in April and specific events that had occurred, including reports of his death). And not only that, he is threatening further attacks just 18 hours after his top lieutenant took credit for the Times Square bombing attempt.

Since Hakeemullah mentions specific dates and events, I was confident about the authenticity of the tapes. My sources confirmed that the tapes were legit, and I again published the news.

The events of the day could best be described as surreal. After the first email arrived and throughout the day, I kept asking myself: Why did they contact me to break the news? What risks am I running by publicizing the tapes? What exactly did this Taliban propagandist "appreciate" about the *Long War Journal*? And there was, of course, a feeling of disgust in communicating with the likes of the Taliban and being a chosen recipient of their propaganda.

Nonetheless while one hates in any way publicizing the voice of the Taliban, there is value in having the world see exactly what they are about. Propaganda cuts both ways. While they want to thump their chest, instill fear among their enemies, and recruit, the tapes also serve to remind us that we are engaged with a real enemy, an enemy that wants to kill us and revels in it. An enemy, moreover, trying to strike us on our own soil. Such points outweigh any Taliban gain in publicizing the tapes.

In the days following, government officials attempted to deflect speculation that the attack could have been launched by the Taliban. Within hours of the attack, officials dismissed the possibility that al Qaeda or an allied Islamist terror group might have been involved, saying instead that the attack was likely carried out by domestic terrorists.

The most egregious statement was made by New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, who said he thought that domestic political extremists were involved. "If I had to guess 25 cents, this would be exactly that, somebody who's homegrown, maybe a mentally deranged person or someone with a political agenda that doesn't like the health care bill or something, it could be anything," Bloomberg told CBS News.

While it would have been perfectly acceptable for officials to have said in those early days that it was too soon to draw conclusions as to who carried out the attack, they chose the other route. They dismissed the possibility that a foreign terrorist group might be involved and promoted the theory that phantom domestic actors were to blame.

This rush to judgment was irresponsible. And ultimately it was wrong. Fifty-three hours after the failed car bombing in Times Square, a Pakistani-American named Faisal Shahzad was arrested in the act of fleeing the country. When questioned by the FBI, he admitted to having trained in a camp in Waziristan, the base of Hakeemullah Mehsud and the Pakistani Taliban. Shahzad is said to have been introduced to the Taliban by a friend with close links to the Jaish-e-Mohammed ("Army of Muhammad"), an al Qaeda-linked terrorist organization. Shahzad's family is also said to have had close ties to slain Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud.

What's more the tapes themselves demand exploration—including an explanation of the extraordinary timing of their release.

First, as mentioned, the website on which the Qari Hussain tape appeared and referred to the Times Square attack was created the day prior to the attack. And the tape was itself uploaded on April 30. This is either a staggering coincidence, or, as my sources believe, the Taliban set up the website and uploaded the video as part of the preparations for the attack.

Second, the tapes address the mystery of Hakeemullah, which has dragged on for months. While numerous Taliban commanders have maintained that he is alive, U.S. and Pakistani officials have insisted he is dead. The media sided with the latter, and the Taliban refused to release a tape of Hakeemullah, citing operational security concerns. Yet, within 24 hours after an attempted car bombing in New York City that was claimed by his top lieutenant, Hakeemullah himself appears on two tapes. And on both, he threatens to carry out more attacks in the United States. Again, either this is a remarkable coincidence, or this propaganda campaign was staged to promote the attack.

And third, the Taliban normally keeps a tight lid on its propaganda. Audio- and videotapes of Hakeemullah and Qari Hussain produced by Umar studios aren't run-of-the-mill items. Whoever released these tapes had access to the highest level of the Taliban's propaganda arm and did so with the leadership's approval.

The known facts point to a direct link between the Times Square car bomb and the Pakistani Taliban. Yet, as of this writing, government officials are denying any evidence of links. ♦

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Don't Mention the War

Why does the Obama administration find it so hard to utter the words 'terrorism' and 'jihad' and 'Islamic extremism'?

By Stephen F. Hayes & Thomas Joscelyn

On Saturday, May 1, a crude car bomb composed of gasoline canisters, propane tanks, fertilizer, and fireworks failed to detonate in Times Square. A nearby T-shirt salesman saw the 1993 Nissan Pathfinder-turned-bomb start smoking. New Yorkers are reminded endlessly: If you "See Something, Say Something." The vendor did. New York City police and FBI agents swarmed the vehicle, the bomb was disassembled, and 53 hours later a Pakistani-American man named Faisal Shahzad was in custody.

Faisal Shahzad

We were lucky. Shahzad panicked. He left in a hurry and failed to take several additional steps that might well have led to the detonation of the bomb. If he had remained calm and if the bomb been better built, there is no telling how many passersby would have been killed.

A few days later, on May 4, President Obama tried to put the attack in context.

> This incident is another sobering reminder of the times in which we live. Around the world and here at home, there are those who would attack our citizens and who would slaughter innocent men, women, and children in pursuit of their murderous agenda. They will stop at nothing to kill and disrupt our way of life. But once again, an attempted attack has been—failed.

The last few words were a bit awkward. It is as if the president wanted to say the attack "has been thwarted" but then realized he could not. The attack failed because Shahzad did not do a better job of constructing his makeshift bomb. No government agency can take credit for that.

Still, the Obama administration celebrated the "Times Square incident," as it is delicately called on the White House's website. It is, the administration believes, a counterterrorism success. After praising the "ordinary citizens" who "were vigilant and reported suspicious activity to the authorities," President Obama claimed that the attack "failed because these authorities—local, state and federal—acted quickly and did what they're trained to do." The *Washington Post* followed up with an account saying that Shahzad's swift capture was a "rare moment to celebrate" for beleaguered Attorney General Eric Holder. White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs echoed this sentiment, saying, "We want to celebrate the success of, rightly so, of what law enforcement was able to do."

But success in the war on terror is not apprehending terrorists after their attacks fail. Success is preventing them from attempting the attack in the first place.

The Times Square attack was the third time in the past six months that an individual terrorist with ties to high-level Islamic radicals overseas has launched an attack on the American homeland. In each instance, America's vast, multibillion dollar intelligence and law enforcement establishment failed to detect the terrorists' plans beforehand. And in each instance Obama administration officials moved quickly to minimize the significance of the attack and downplay the connections that the attackers had with international terrorists.

On the morning of May 2, the day after the attack, Sec-

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retary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano appeared on ABC's *This Week*. Jake Tapper asked her about the likelihood of international involvement in the attempted bombing, pointing to similarities between the crude bomb discovered in the SUV and those used in attempted bombings in London and Glasgow in 2007.

"Well, right now, we have no evidence that it is anything other than a one-off, but we are alerting state, local officials around the country, letting them know what is going on," Napolitano replied.

Calling the attempted attack a "one-off" wasn't a direct response to Tapper's question. What's clear is that Napolitano, who used "one-off" twice and also described the bomb as "amateurish," wanted to downplay the seriousness of the attack. So did other Obama administration and law enforcement officials, who dismissed claims of responsibility by the Pakistani Taliban (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan).

Many details of Faisal Shahzad's life remain murky. It will take weeks, if not months, to fill the gaps in our knowledge of his biography. But one thing is clear: When he drove a 1993 Pathfinder to Times Square on May 1, he was a committed jihadist, an Islamist radical inspired by religion to kill Americans.

Almost immediately after that attack, administration and law enforcement officials downplayed the possibility that Hasan, a practicing Muslim, was motivated by a radical ideology.

Nidal Malik Hasan

Shahzad arrived in the United States in 1999. Even in pre-9/11 America, he provoked suspicion. According to CBS News, Shahzad carried $80,000 in "cash or cash instruments" with him into the United States on his trips from Pakistan beginning in 1999, and his name was entered into the U.S. government's Traveler Enforcement Compliance System—a database "designed to identify individuals suspected of or involved in violation of federal law" in CBS's description. It stayed on the list through 2008. Shahzad comes from a prominent Pakistani family, so perhaps the cash was merely intended to help him start his new life abroad. Still, it was enough to draw the interest of American authorities more than a decade ago.

Shahzad's activities again warranted scrutiny by federal authorities in 2004, when he sold his Norwalk, Connecticut, condominium for $261,000. According to the *New York Times*, the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) interviewed the buyer "asking for details of the transaction and for information about" Shahzad. The authorities told the buyer they were merely "checking everything out." Why they thought Shahzad deserved checking out is not yet clear as the JTTF doesn't typically knock on the door every time a condo is sold.

It is not clear when Shahzad became radicalized, but by early 2009, he was certainly a committed jihadist. On April 17 of that year, he became a naturalized American citizen. In June, he quit his job as a financial analyst at a Connecticut firm and returned to Pakistan, where he would receive bombmaking training at a terrorist camp.

In Pakistan, according to multiple press accounts, he was met by Mohammed Rehan, the leader of Jaish-e-Mohammed (the "Army of Muhammad")—a known al Qaeda ally. Jaish-e-Mohammed was originally created by the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence agency as part of the Pakistani government's proxy war in Kashmir. Over time, it became more tightly integrated with al Qaeda—partly as a result of their shared safe haven in northern Pakistan.

New recruits do not just happen to meet a terrorist of Rehan's standing. Rehan must already have had good reasons to trust Shahzad. According to some accounts, Rehan even personally escorted Shahzad to the training camp in Waziristan. Pakistani officials have reportedly arrested Rehan in connection with the bombing.

It wasn't just the Jaish-e-Mohammed. Leaders of the Pakistani Taliban (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan or "Movement of the Taliban in Pakistan") claimed responsibility for "the recent attack in the USA" in a series of videos. Such claims are hard to prove, of course, and terrorist groups often claim responsibility for attacks in which they had no role to project an aura of power and boost recruitment. But these claims were interesting not only because of their contents but because of the timing of their posting. The first video was posted a day before the attack on an Internet video channel created that same day.

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In that video, Qari Hussain Mehsud, a trainer of suicide bombers and senior member of the Pakistani Taliban leadership, explained that the attack was meant to avenge the deaths of senior Taliban and al Qaeda leaders, including Baitullah Mehsud, leader of the Pakistani Taliban until his death last summer in a Predator strike.

Shahzad is reported to have family contacts among the Pakistani Taliban. In interrogations with U.S. officials after he was captured, he acknowledged attending a training camp in Taliban-dominated Waziristan and, like Qari Hussain, said that his motive was revenge for the drone attacks. The attack that killed Baitullah Mehsud took place while Shahzad was likely at the training camp in Waziristan.

With increasing specificity, news reports last week highlighted Shahzad's ties to jihadists.

On Friday, May 7, however, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that General David Petraeus, head of U.S. Central Command, had described Shahzad as a "lone wolf." Supporters of the administration quickly pointed to those comments as confirming the initial views of Obama administration officials that Shahzad did not have terrorist connections.

Contacted by THE WEEKLY STANDARD on Friday about the comments, a public affairs officer for the general, Colonel Erik Gunhus, said that Petraeus "was talking in general terms about what he had seen as of 0800 on Thursday" and was "not making a definitive statement or prediction."

On Friday, the *Washington Post* reported that "U.S. officials say evidence points to the involvement of the Pakistani Taliban, a predominantly Pashtun group based in the Afghan border region whose anti-state agenda traditionally did not overlap with that of Kashmir-focused organizations." The paper also cited Pakistan's interior minister, Rehman Malik, who said Thursday that Shahzad did not act alone.

Napolitano said that there was 'no indication' the Christmas plot was 'part of anything larger.' And three days after the attack, President Obama called Abdulmutallab an 'isolated extremist.'

REUTERS

Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab

Late last week, ABC News added a new twist: Shahzad "had contact with" al Qaeda cleric Anwar al Awlaki. Citing law enforcement and intelligence sources, ABC reported that Shahzad's "web of jihadist contacts" included "the figure who has emerged as a central figure in many recent domestic terror attempts—radical American-born Muslim cleric Anwar Awlaki."

That may be somewhat overstated. According to a source with knowledge of the investigation, Shahzad has acknowledged downloading Awlaki's sermons from the Internet and, more generally, supporting Awlaki's efforts to take the jihad to America. But this source says it's unclear that Shahzad and Awlaki had any two-way communications.

Whatever his role—whether direct and operational or distant and inspirational—Awlaki's reach cannot be disputed. And it is yet another element of this attack that echoes the other two attacks on the U.S. homeland in the last six months.

The first of those came on November 5, 2009, when Major Nidal Malik Hasan went on a shooting rampage at Fort Hood, Texas. Almost immediately after that attack, administration and law enforcement officials downplayed the possibility that Hasan, a practicing Muslim, was motivated by a radical ideology. One FBI official told Fox News that the bureau was not even discussing the possibility of Hasan's connections to terrorist groups.

But we quickly learned that Hasan had email contact with Awlaki in the months leading up to his attack. At first the FBI dismissed the contents of those emails as "benign." But that claim became hard to defend when details of the emails were leaked. (In one, Hasan asked whether it was permissible under *sharia* law to kill U.S. military personnel. And in another, Hasan told Awlaki that he could not wait to join the cleric in the afterlife.) The bureau revised its assessment, claiming only that the emails were consistent with Hasan's research as an Army psychologist.

It was not until months after the Fort Hood shooting that the Obama administration would label it an act of terrorism. "Violent Islamic terrorism . . . was part and parcel of the Ft. Hood killings," Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano told the Senate Homeland Security Committee in February. But, astonishingly, the report that came

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out of a Pentagon review of the attack did not even mention Hasan's radical views or his contacts with Awlaki.

The second attack came on December 25, 2009, when a Nigerian al Qaeda recruit, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, boarded a Detroit-bound plane wearing an underwear bomb. Months earlier, Abdulmutallab's father had let the U.S. embassy in Abuja know that his son had adopted extremist views and disappeared into Yemen, an al Qaeda hotspot. Other intelligence demonstrated that Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which is headquartered in Yemen, was preparing to use a Nigerian recruit in an attack. Indeed, AQAP was training Abdulmutallab at the time. Abdulmutallab was also a known friend of Islamic extremists living in England, where he had studied for years.

As in the case of the Fort Hood attack, federal authorities failed to connect the dots beforehand. And, as was the case in Times Square, America simply got lucky. Abdulmutallab's underwear bomb failed to ignite. Vigilant passengers pounced on him to make sure he did not get another chance to bring down the airliner.

From the outset, the Obama administration downplayed the attack and Abdulmutallab's connections to terrorists. Despite the fact that the U.S. government did nothing to stop Abdulmutallab, Napolitano and White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs claimed that the "system worked."

Napolitano said that there was "no indication" the Christmas plot was "part of anything larger." And three days after the attack, in a statement on December 28, President Obama called Abdulmutallab an "isolated extremist."

Even at the time they made these comments there were indications in the press that Abdulmutallab had been dispatched by al Qaeda. Abdulmutallab told interrogators on Christmas Day that he had been trained in Yemen and that other terrorists would follow.

So, three attacks in six months, by attackers with connections to the global jihadist network—connections that administration officials have gone out of their way to diminish.

The most striking thing about all three attacks is not what we heard, but what we haven't heard. There has been very little talk about the global war that the Obama administration sometimes acknowledges we are fighting and virtually nothing about what motivates our enemy: radical Islam.

This is no accident. Janet Napolitano never used the word "terrorism" in her first appearance before Congress as secretary-designate of Homeland Security on January 15, 2009. Shortly thereafter, the *Washington Post* reported that the Obama administration had dropped the phrase "Global War on Terror" in favor of "Overseas Contingency Operations." And just last month, we learned that the White House's forthcoming National Security Strategy would not use religious words such as "jihad" and "Islamic extremism."

When asked why she did not utter the word "terrorism" in the course of her testimony, Napolitano explained that she used "man-caused disaster" instead to avoid "the politics of fear."

The Department of Homeland Security was created after the worst terrorist attack in U.S. history to prevent further terrorist attacks on U.S. soil. And the head of that department is worried that using the word "terrorism" is playing the politics of fear.

There have been three attacks in six months, by attackers with connections to the global jihadist network—connections that administration officials have gone out of their way to diminish. There has been very little talk about the global war on terror from the Obama administration.

The White House is very sensitive to criticism that Obama does not understand the United States is at war. "I don't think anyone realizes this very hard reality more than President Obama," said Dan Pfeiffer, the White House communications director, in a statement after the Christmas Day attack. Pfeiffer went on: "In his inaugural, the President said 'our nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred.'"

It is true. Obama said this. But in that same speech, Obama offered another view of the source of our security. "Our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint."

And the president's mention of the war came not as a bold declaration of strength, but as an entry in a much longer list of national maladies—most of which were domestic in nature.

> That we are in the midst of a crisis is now well understood. Our nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost; jobs shed; businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly; our schools fail too many; and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet.

It is not enough for the president to recognize that we're at war. He has to lead us in the fight. ♦

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Europe Is No Model

The genius of American politics

By Jeff Bergner

As Europe is rocked by the Greek financial crisis, which seems likely to spread to additional European states, it may be worth asking why anyone would see in European politics a model for the United States. Yet this is exactly the position of America's political left, which looks approvingly at Europe's health care systems offering universal coverage. Now that Obamacare has been enacted, moreover, some progressive voices are already calling for a European-style Value Added Tax (VAT) to pay for it and the other ballooning entitlement programs run by Washington. The left continues to press America to look ever more like a European centrally administered social welfare state.

Most Americans—not just conservatives—are uneasy with the European model. This is not just a matter of national pride or misplaced chauvinism. There is something about the European model that most Americans distrust, though it is less easy to say exactly what that is. The reasons reach far back in the American story.

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

American colonists retained much from their European countries of origin. Their languages, customs, manners, arts and architecture, and the philosophical concepts of toleration and liberty were all imported from Europe. There was scarcely a department of life that did not owe much to European sources. Except one: politics. America was founded to be different from Europe. The earliest settlers came to America to escape European political persecution and to realize ambitions that were not possible in Europe. Even when perpetuating European customs in their legislatures and townships, colonists never did so slavishly but always with a distinctly American slant. And when the Framers wrote the Constitution to give form to the newly independent country, they aimed deliberately to produce a political system that was decidedly non-European. Americans achieved a distinctive political system and saw European politics as more to be pitied than envied. So deep was this strain that it would not occur to any serious American for a full century afterward to borrow from Europe's politics.

What did the Constitution's Framers find so objectionable about European politics? What were they trying to avoid in creating their "experiment" in governance? Their first major innovation—which impelled the Constitutional Convention—was the creation of an American union. The Framers argued that sovereign European states' living side by side with one another was the cause of frequent wars. The Framers' remedy—the solution to the frequent temptation to war among rival sovereign states—was a union of states. Through the innovation of union, the Framers aimed to minimize the danger of war between the states. They further argued that union would prevent European nations from fostering rivalries between the American states (a view whose truth would be confirmed by England's assistance to the Confederacy during the Civil War). Several decades later, when the United States became stronger, it expanded its opposition to the importation of European politics to the entire Western Hemisphere. The Monroe Doctrine made good on Alexander Hamilton's vow to "teach that assuming brother moderation."

Union, however, was not an end in itself, but a means to achieve a second and deeper American objective: the protection of individual liberties over and against the government. Europe knew well enough how governments could control the people; as Madison observed of government, the Framers' task was to "oblige it to control itself." The constant possibility of war led European regimes to create standing armies and centralize political power. Such centralized power was destructive of the very liberties the Framers believed government should protect. England's insularity gave it space within which a

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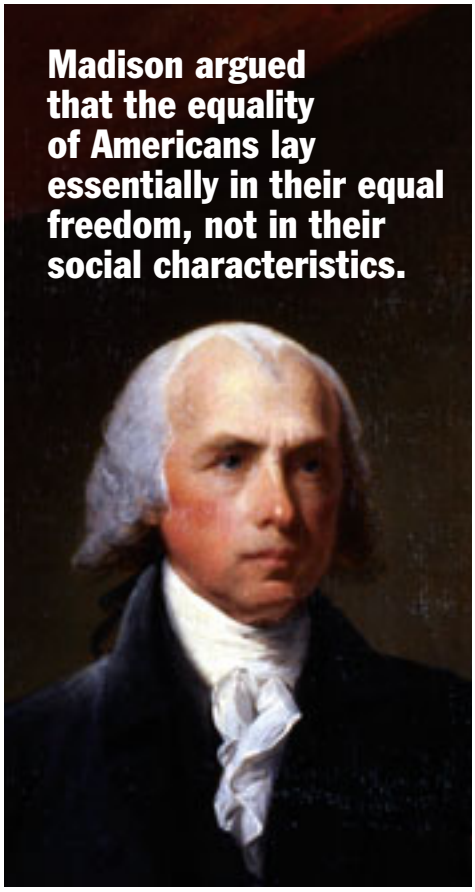
partial system of liberty could survive. It was the purpose of the Framers to extend this protection so as to permit a far wider space within which liberty might thrive. Within this space, a very non-European practice—indeed, an anti-European practice, the separation of central government powers—was devised in order to oblige the government to control itself.

Alexis de Tocqueville spoke clearly to the priority of liberty in the American case:

> In America it is freedom that is old, and equality is comparatively new. The opposite obtains in Europe, where equality introduced by the absolute power of the kings and under their eyes had already penetrated into the habits of the people long before the idea of liberty had entered their thoughts.

How can he say this? Weren't European nations and principalities everywhere characterized by royalty and aristocracy, producing a stratified class system? Was it not these very social distinctions that the Framers aimed to prevent, explicitly prohibiting titles of nobility in Article One of the Constitution?

There is no doubt that equality was much on the minds of the Framers, though they were not of one opinion about it. Charles Pinckney, for example, argued that Americans enjoyed an "equality of condition" that was absent in Europe. Hamilton disagreed, arguing that inequality existed in America, that it was bound to increase, and that its growth was not problematical. Madison, as was often the case, offered the deepest answer, which contained within it the third major innovation of American politics: the importance of diversity. Yes, Madison said, there existed a kind of equality in America—not, however, of sameness, but of diversity. It was this very diversity that would protect the union and would in turn be protected by the union. It was diversity that would help to guarantee limits to the majority's ability to diminish the liberty of minorities. Madison argued, in effect, that the equality of Americans lay essentially in their equal freedom, not in their social characteristics. In this way, the American innovations of union, liberty, and diversity would all work to reinforce one another in a new political system embodied in a government with limited powers.



THE EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

Tocqueville was of course well aware that aristocracy and social stratification continued to exist in Europe in the early 19th century. But he argued that the intellectual and social battle for the future had already been won and that the ideal of equality was the victor. In this, as always, he was prescient. He argued that Europeans were accustomed to being controlled by their governments and had been for centuries. As the ideal of equality drove out monarchies and aristocracies, one type of centralized control was substituted for another. Monarchies and principalities gave way to the centrally administered state.

The ideal of equality had never been tempered by the experience of liberty in Europe, as it had in America. Control by the political center seemed natural to Europeans, who transferred their condition from one type of centralized management to another. Kings and dukes were out, prime ministers and chancellors were in. And thus Europeans saw no reason whatever, as did the American Framers, to saddle their modern governments with complex systems of separation of powers and checks and balances. Europe inclined quite naturally to parliamentary systems, in which the governing party possesses at once both the legislative and executive powers and can secure its agenda in practice.

Centralized government power in Europe, as the American Framers understood, was reinforced by the existence of sovereign nations living side by side. Considered as a whole, Europe was marked by diversity; but each European state was relatively homogeneous within its borders, and the homogeneity of each state pitted it against the others. The result was predictable. While the American union was tested once in a bloody civil war—and reaffirmed decisively—European states continued to war with one another. To highlight only some of the conflicts, Europe was at war with itself in 1796-1814, 1821, 1823, 1830, 1848, 1866, 1870, 1875-1878, 1914-1918, and 1939-1945. And if dominant American leadership, which had grown weary of being drawn into these struggles, had not insisted on steps toward European unity, Europe might well still be at war with itself today.

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Europe handled the issue of diversity very differently from America. Relatively homogeneous nation states managed their affairs by relying on centralized administrative power. But the problem of diversity between nation states was never resolved, leading to frequent warfare. The interlocking themes of union, liberty and equality, and diversity were thus treated in fundamentally different ways in Europe and America. In considering these great differences, there seemed to Americans little worth borrowing from Europe. Whatever else the American republic borrowed from Europe during its first century, the political system was something it rejected.

TODAY'S EUROPE AS A MODEL?

Why then should today's Europe be a model for American politics? On the matter of political union, Europe is finally, albeit slowly, changing. It is in the process of trying to solve the problem of union, which the American Framers solved in 1787. The political steps Europe has taken since 1946 make it far less likely that the still relatively homogeneous nation states of Europe will go to war with one another. As a result, and just as the American Framers might have predicted, European standing armies have dwindled.

Many easy steps toward European union have been taken. Fewer but more difficult steps remain. How much power should be ceded to the European center? Will the citizens of the larger, more successful states be required to support the poorer ones? European nations today are in the throes of this dilemma: In a word, must Germany bail out Greece? Given the common European currency, there are strong pressures to do so. But at bottom this is still a German decision. Does Germany wish to be part of a European union in which Greeks and other non-Germans, not the government in Berlin, make these decisions?

So, too, on defense issues. Will European nations be pleased to contribute their military forces to support decisions made by a European foreign minister or president, rather than by their own national governments? Here is one measure of today's European hesitance on this score: When the United States chose its first president, it chose in George Washington its strongest, most highly respected leader; as Europe edges toward a centralized government, it seems to be searching for the blandest, least impressive candidate it can find.

Today's Europe is trying to reduce the genuine political issues surrounding union to administrative questions. This is Europe's way; this is what it knows how to do. That the next steps toward union are tougher than those taken thus far is testament to the fact that Europe is encountering genuine political issues, not mere administrative niceties. There may indeed be a "democratic deficit" in Europe, but it is not newly emerging from the attempt to form a union. It has been there all along, in the centralized administrative capitals of Europe. As it advances toward union, Europe is confronting its diversity, and the slowness of the process suggests how very difficult this is. Europe has been unable to create a union by administrative fiat because it still has not resolved the foundational political choices implicit in union, much less had its union seriously tested. In all of this, what is there for the United States to emulate? Indeed, perhaps America is the better model.

Second, the predominance of equality over liberty in Europe has led to another predictable result: European central governments are not agents for preserving liberty, but for doing the bidding of their peoples. The European government's role is not to preserve liberty by checking its own powers, but to serve as an enforcer of equality. The European administrative state is unencumbered by the kinds of limits that restrain the American government. There are no sectors of life into which it should not intrude; there is no need for its actions to be "slowed down" by the restraints of precedent or complicated rules and procedures; there is no need for it to be checked by slavish adherence to a pseudo-sacred document written in the distant past; and there is no reason not to try to impose fundamental equality by administrative rules, as opposed to full political debate.

We see today the unsurprising outcome. Majorities will provide for themselves an ever-expanding menu of entitlements. What reason could exist to oppose them? In the absence of the tempering effect of liberty, which teaches governments prudence about what they should and should not attempt, massive entitlement spending only increases. Majorities demanding entitlements do not much trouble themselves about who will pay the bill. Democratic majorities—as opposed to freedom-loving citizens—are self-entitled. When money for these entitlements run out, as they inevitably will, there is only one way to find new funds: by borrowing from the next generation, for whom it cares little.

Europe is further down the course of self-created entitlements than the United States (though we have gained ground in the last 18 months). As ever new entitlements are provided, ever more taxes are levied; ever more taxes diminish the productivity and creativity of the people; the goals and ends of the populace become ever narrower, until finally even rearing a replacement generation is too great a burden, threatening people's comfort; and ever more money is borrowed from ever fewer lenders. This is unsustainable, and the fact that it has not yet come to its unhappy conclusion is no reason to emulate it. European politics is a slow engine of self-destruction. The question is not whether, but when, it will collapse. And when it

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does, the result is likely to be a more rigid and meaner despotism than the soft despotism of today.

Tocqueville describes this problem eloquently:

> Only perceptive and clear-sighted men see the dangers with which equality threatens us, and they generally avoid pointing them out. They see that the troubles they fear are distant and console themselves that they will only fall on future generations, for which the present generation hardly cares. . . . The good things that freedom brings are seen only as time passes, and it is always easy to mistake the cause that brought them about. The advantages of equality are felt immediately, and it is daily apparent where they come from.

The only corrective to a too great love of equality is a tempering dose of liberty, that is, a degree of prudence about what the central government should and should not do. The only corrective to bankruptcy short of centrally mandated rationing is restraint of the role of government. In all of this, America still seems a better model for Europe than vice versa.

Consider, finally, how Europe treats the political question of diversity. Native European populations may be declining, but the Islamic population, which has migrated to Europe largely over the last four or five decades, is not. And it will not. How does Europe address the many issues arising from this relatively new strand of diversity in Europe? So far, it seems, largely by denial.

Broadly speaking, and granting the egregious exceptions of slavery and the Indians, it has been America's approach to provide liberty, or political space, within which diversity can be expressed. In the early United States, by and large, different Christian sects practiced their religions seriously and openly. Jews also enjoyed the free exercise of religion, as did most other sects and, in recent decades, a relatively small but growing Muslim population. The American political order established a political space in which religious diversity can flourish.

Europe has handled religious diversity far differently; it has sought in its predictable way to subordinate religious denominations to the central political authority. Today, a variety of denominations exist, but few flourish. They are tolerated because they are controlled and leveled under government registration, affiliation, support, and power. Europe has little experience with truly free religious expression apart from and unauthorized by the central government; Europe reconciles religious freedom and equality by subordinating religion to the state.

This will not be so easy with Islam. Europe has marginalized its growing Muslim communities, who feel limited political allegiance to the countries to which they emigrated and which they have little incentive to leave. It is a fair question whether any nation has had a positive experience over the long term integrating large Muslim and Christian populations on an equal footing. It is also a fair question whether there are bounds to how much diversity a political order can successfully accommodate. But nothing Europe has done on this front is encouraging. European freethinkers in the 17th and 18th centuries mocked Islam because it was too dangerous to mock Christianity in the political culture of their day. Now Europeans mock Islam at their personal peril. The prospect of a broad, serious, and diverse religious landscape, including Islam, in Europe seems slim. Europe knows how to tolerate religious expression only by subordinating it, not by protecting its free expression. The French government's response to Muslim headscarves is indicative: It forbids all conspicuous religious attire or symbols in public schools. This approach is inconceivable in the United States. Europe's tendency to address ethnic and religious diversity by subordination is precipitating a serious crisis that will not be long in coming. Here, too, perhaps America has lessons to teach.

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM REDUX

Europe has solved none of the fundamental political concerns that have animated American politics since the founding: union; limited government as the expression of a balance between equality and liberty; and diversity. It would be folly for the United States to emulate Europe's political model. If, as seems likely, no serious U.S. statesman would trade America's problems for Europe's, why then emulate its politics?

There remains a very deep strain of America's political culture that is fiercely independent. Our politics should continue to allow its expression. In many quarters there remains a rough and ready "Don't tread on me" attitude. This is nothing to be ashamed of, or read out of our politics; it is to be defended, even gloried in. It is the very source of America's ability to temper the powerful forces pushing toward government-mandated equality of condition. It is the basis for America's long history of prudence in not asking the central government to do too much. And it is therefore also the basis on which we have preserved—at least up until the present moment—a degree of fiscal sanity.

So, too, with our celebration of diversity. The most rough-hewn American with a gun rack on his truck—and the congressman he sends to Washington—are more genuinely independent-minded than the most *outré* performer on Europe's weirdest stage. When Europe encounters genuine ethnic, religious, or cultural diversity—the Turk in Germany, the Algerian Muslim in France, the Pakistani in London—it stumbles because it does not know how to permit diversity to flourish. It is in these

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encounters that Europe reverts to form and seeks to level differences under the power of the state. Where that fails, only marginalization is possible.

The political left in the United States seizes on one thread out of the complex American political fabric—equality—and emphasizes it to the exclusion of all else. The left displays scant concern about using the federal government to force equality of condition; it displays even less concern for prudence in what it asks the government to do; and of late it displays virtually no concern at all for fiscal responsibility and the welfare of future generations. It chafes under constitutional and procedural restrictions on its ability to advance its agenda. And it seeks to stifle the free expression of religious and dissenting views in the public square.

The American left has turned its back on the incomparably rich and sophisticated political tradition that has been bequeathed to us. The narrative of the left has this great tactical virtue: It is simple, even simple-minded, in its conception, lacking the slightest nuance. Perhaps this accounts for the left's singularly empty rhetoric; beneath its ad hominem attacks, faux emoting, and tactical calculation, its intellectual architecture could not support a feather.

The American left has turned its back on the incomparably rich and sophisticated political tradition that has been bequeathed to us. The narrative of the left is simple, even simple-minded, in its conception, lacking the slightest nuance.

America owns a finer political tradition. Restoring it requires new and better policies through which to express the equality Tocqueville calls the "chief passion which stirs men." Our policies cannot and should not oppose equality, but must find ways to express equality consistent with the love of liberty and respect for diversity that we have inherited. It is difficult to advance such policies at a time when majorities of both houses of Congress, the president, and the mainstream media are all in love with the European administrative social welfare state. But the political balance is likely to tip again, as Americans instinctively react to the too narrow vision of the left. The question is: When power does tip back, will Republican leaders be equipped with the tools to restore our better tradition?

The political left will not disappear. If the real hopes and dissatisfactions of the American people are not met with policies consistent with our deeper tradition, the left will again address them in its narrow egalitarian way. This happened with health care reform. Had Republicans addressed the relatively solvable problems of competition, portability, and preexisting conditions in a way consistent with liberty and equality, President Obama could not have made stick his claim that the entire American health care system was "broken." Here is a lesson applicable to other issues of concern to Americans, whether illegal immigration, energy independence, entitlements, or above all astronomical federal deficits. Let Republicans propose sensible policies that speak to these concerns in a manner consistent with our deepest traditions. If they do not, the field will lie open for the left to argue once more that only a larger federal role can address these "crises."

If, for example, we do not reduce federal spending deeply, and quickly, from the levels to which it has only recently soared, we will soon be staring in the face a European-style VAT to pay for a permanently expanded federal share of the economy. We have witnessed astonishing extralegal and extra-constitutional acts (such as the federal takeover of the automobile industry) that grew out of the recent financial crisis. The left relies on crises, real or contrived, for its purposes. As Tocqueville said, "Fear of disorder and love of well-being unconsciously lead democracies to increase the functions of the central government." To avert the misuse of crises, real or perceived, thoughtful leaders must be prepared with sensible plans to address the actual concerns of the American people.

American exceptionalism is not, as the left caricatures it, some preemptive right to run the world. To the contrary, it is the practice of a politics that addresses fundamental problems in a specific way, namely, a way consistent with union, with a balance between liberty and equality expressed through limited government, and with a decent respect for diversity. If there is another nation that approaches the fundamental choices of politics in this rich way—as opposed to simple, majoritarian egalitarianism—I am unaware of it. President Obama expressed his true contempt for American exceptionalism when he said, "I believe in American exceptionalism—just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism." A more shallow, cynical misunderstanding of American exceptionalism is hard to imagine.

American exceptionalism, rightly explained, can be the source of powerful policies that are consistent with America's best traditions. Such policies can, and must, be developed so as to gain popular support if they are to be successful. Developing these policies is the pressing task before our most thoughtful leaders. ♦

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Dana Plato, Todd Bridges, Gary Coleman, ca. 1978

His Cautionary Tale

A (child) star is reborn

BY VICTORINO MATUS

You may be wondering: Why, exactly, in such a magazine as this, is there a review about the life and times of former child actor Todd Bridges, who played older brother Willis Jackson to the adorable Arnold (Gary Coleman) in the late 1970s/early '80s sitcom *Diff'rent Strokes*? The answer can be found on page 104:

> When I was sixteen, I got to be a guest on the sixth season of *Circus of the Stars*. . . . So I got to appear with the hot young stars of the day, like my good friend Scott Baio, and one of the most beautiful girls at the time, Brooke Shields.
>
> My event was trapeze, and that was the best, because I got to work with a bunch of sexy women in leotards. . . . Well, we were shooting one day, and I looked over and Brooke Shields was on the trampoline. . . . So I rolled up on her, and I tried to be all smooth.
>
> [Bridges's *Diff'rent Strokes* costar Dana Plato] was on *Circus of the Stars* that season, too, and she came up right then and pulled me aside.
>
> "My friend wants you to go to my house with us," she said.
>
> "Can't you see I'm talking to Brooke?" I said. "I'm trying to get her number."
>
> "But my friend wants you to go to my house with us," she said again.
>
> Obviously I wasn't getting her meaning, so she broke it down for me.
>
> "My friend wants to have sex with you and me at the same time," she said.
>
> That was all it took. I was out of there.

Killing Willis
From Diff'rent Strokes to the Mean Streets to the Life I Always Wanted
by Todd Bridges
with Sarah Tomlinson
Touchstone, 288 pp., $26

I remember as a kid watching *Circus of the Stars*—I can even recall Todd Bridges on the trapeze. But I'd always wondered what the show was like behind the scenes. Who knew it was one giant Roman orgy?

Regarding *Diff'rent Strokes*, Bridges has fond memories of the early seasons, in which he and Coleman really did behave like close siblings. (The sitcom centered around two black brothers who are adopted by a white tycoon named Philip Drummond, played by Conrad Bain, after their mother dies; the mother was also Drummond's maid. The boys then spend their new lives in a Park Avenue penthouse along with stepsister Kimberly, played by Dana Plato.) But it was only a matter of time before off-camera tensions began to spill over.

The diminutive Coleman, whose growth was stunted by kidney ailments, emerged as the star of the show. But as Bridges notes, Coleman's parents—

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particularly his father Willie—were notorious control freaks, carefully monitoring their son's activities, inflating his ego, and belittling the rest of the cast. Coleman himself underwent a change in attitude that culminated in a heated argument between the boys, ending with Coleman slapping Bridges in the face and Bridges responding in kind.

But Bridges was also sympathetic to Coleman, due to his ill health and the enormous pressures to which he was subjected. "Gary was so sick after one of his operations," he recalls, "that he was throwing up everywhere on the set. Willie was right there, but he wasn't comforting Gary." Instead the father tells the son, "You need to go back to work, because people are depending on you." Years later, Coleman sued his parents over the mishandling of his trust fund.

As for Dana Plato, who was responsible for Bridges's first sexual experience with a woman, addiction to various narcotics took a toll on her work. Not only would she space out and forget her lines, but she would also wander off the set. On one occasion, Plato attempted to drive her car through the Universal Studios spinning tunnel prop.

> I guess she didn't realize that there was a special mechanism that pulled the trams through. Once she got her car into the tunnel, she ended up getting stuck. She couldn't get her car to move and, I guess because of the spinning sensation, she started throwing up all over the place. It was a mess. They had to stop the tours for the day and figure out a way to pull her car out.

When Plato became pregnant, her character was phased out. She had difficulty finding work thereafter, and her drug use continued until she died of an overdose in 1999. (Bridges leaves Plato some dignity, however, by not mentioning the time she was arrested for robbing a video store, or when she starred in a pornographic film entitled, you guessed it, *Different Strokes*.)

There are a few precious moments in this book, in which the reader wishes the story simply ended there. For instance, even before *Diff'rent Strokes*, Bridges was popular enough to be included in the Hollywood Teen Tour: "The whole group of us would make appearances at malls and amusement parks, and packs of girls would crowd around us, screaming and trying to rip off our clothes," he writes. And Bridges had a blast, with the exception of an occasional heckler who yelled obscenities like, "Get off the stage, nigger!" This occurred a few times and rattled him badly. But Bridges was in good company: Along for the ride were Scott Baio, Willie Ames of *Eight Is Enough*, and Lou Ferrigno, the Incredible Hulk.

On trial for shooting a crack dealer, 1989

BETTMANN / CORBIS

Yes, Lou Ferrigno, the Incredible Hulk.

Alas, the story does not end there. *Killing Willis* is primarily about a young black actor who was on his way to becoming a major star: Prior to *Diff'rent Strokes* Bridges appeared in commercials, on *The Waltons*, *Little House on the Prairie*, *Roots*, and was a regular character on the *Barney Miller* spinoff, *Fish*. He also starred with O.J. Simpson in a movie called, fittingly, *A Killing Affair*. But blocking his path to stardom were a heavy drinking, physically abusive father, a child-molesting publicist, embezzling accountants, racist cops, and worst of all, drugs.

Not long after *Diff'rent Strokes* was cancelled in 1986, Bridges's dabbling in narcotics turned into a full-time occupation. As he puts it, "I was just going out, going out, going out, clubbing, doing drugs, doing more drugs, having sex with women, and then more drugs, and women, and drugs, over and over, until I went under." And did he ever. Finding that he couldn't get high enough from cocaine, Bridges eventually transitioned to crack.

"The thing about crack," he explains, "is it's possible to smoke a lot of it, which meant I could stay high all the time. I definitely wanted to be high all the time." Of course, maintaining this state of bliss also required money, of which he had little left. At the height of his career Bridges was pulling in $30,000 per episode of *Diff'rent Strokes*. By the end of the 1980s, he had resorted to dealing crack in order to feed his addiction, which was something fierce: "It would have been hard as hell to snort fourteen grams of coke a day without my nose falling off. But I could smoke fourteen grams easy."

Bridges finally hits rock bottom when he starts using methamphetamines:

> I was hanging out at one of these meth houses when one of the girls leaned over toward me and slid her hand up my thigh in a way that told me exactly what she had in mind. I took one look at her. Teeth all ground down. Skin covered in acne. The bones of her skull looked like they were about to poke through her face. The girls who were on meth, those were some beat-down-looking girls. Even I didn't want to get with them.

And yet he does "get with them"—which is a far cry from his heyday surrounded by NFL cheerleaders and the

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like. But even then, there were warning signs that such reckless behavior came with consequences: "When we went out," Bridges remembers, "there were these different groups—the actors, the football players, and the singers—and the girls kind of went around from group to group. So we all ended up sharing the same girls. That's why, when Magic Johnson got sick, all of us guys who used to hang out back then were really worried."

Killing Willis makes clear how the temptations of celebrity life can lead down a vicious path, resulting in pain and humiliation. (And could there be anything more humiliating than being strapped down at the CPC Westwood rehab center wearing nothing but an adult diaper for several days?) But of course, it's nothing new. Child actors from Carl Switzer (Alfalfa of *Our Gang* fame, shot dead at 31 in an argument over money) to '80s teen heartthrob Corey Haim (dead of an overdose two months ago) have all faced similar perils.

Some, like Ron Howard and Leonardo DiCaprio, have been luckier than others.

Count Bridges among the lucky ones: He is still alive, sober, married with children, and running a small film company with his brother. And he owes it all to his mother and to God—Who, he says, spoke to him. Indeed, for Bridges to have survived not only drug addiction but also temporary imprisonment in a cell block that included "Night Stalker" Richard Ramirez and Lyle Menendez, is nothing short of a miracle.

This is a cautionary tale as well as a work in progress: Although the subtitle of *Killing Willis* is *From* Diff'rent Strokes *to the Mean Streets to the Life I Always Wanted*, Bridges doesn't actually get to that life he always wanted until page 253. But you get the sense that he is serious this time about turning his life around and that, with continued assistance from his family and the Almighty, Todd Bridges will be able to stay on the path of sobriety.

Unless, of course, he gets invited to reappear on *Circus of the Stars*. Then all bets are off. ♦

B&A

East Meets West

Europe and America are divided by a common language. **BY TOD LINDBERG**

Barack Obama in Berlin, 2008

ANDREAS RENTZ / GETTY IMAGES

At last, we have the essential complement to Robert Kagan's *Of Paradise and Power*, and its subtitle—"How America and Europe Are Alike"—will surely evoke protest from those on both sides of the Atlantic who have become vested advocates of the differences between the United States and Europe and the manifest superiority of one side over and against the other.

The Narcissism of Minor Differences
How America and Europe Are Alike
by Peter Baldwin
Oxford, 336 pp., $24.95

Kagan encapsulated his provocative dual thesis, propounded at short-book length in 2003 as transatlantic relations were blowing up over the Iraq war, in the phrase, "Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus." Critics have been trying to chip away at him ever since, but he really did pin down something essential about how power shapes attitudes and attitudes shape power in the United States and Europe. His argument remains the lodestone for debate over transatlantic relations and will continue to do so until the underlying configurations of power and ideas about power change.

It is hardly on questions of power alone that the op-ed pages on both sides of the Atlantic bristle with accusations predicated on a sense of self-superiority amidst fundamental difference between Europe and the United States: "Jungle capitalism" vs. a strong social safety net, American moralism vs. European sophistication, religious believers vs. the secular heirs of the Enlightenment.

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The contention of Peter Baldwin is that all of the difference-mongering about the United States and Europe is wildly overblown—that, in fact, across a panoply of quantifiable social characteristics and policy outcomes, the United States generally falls not outside the European range, but squarely within it. In 212 charts, 60 pages of footnotes, and a crackling prose style refreshingly at odds with the statistical material under consideration, he proves the case beyond a reasonable doubt.

Europeans are overtaxed by American standards, no? Well, it's true that total tax revenue per capita (adjusted for purchasing power parity) is higher in France and Sweden than in the United States; but as it happens, it's lower in Italy, the United Kingdom, and Germany. Still, income taxes are more progressive in Europe, aren't they? In Germany, Spain, and France, yes; in Denmark, Italy, and the Netherlands, no. Rich Americans get away with paying little, right? In fact, the richest 10 percent of Americans pay 45 percent of total taxes, a higher percentage than any country in Western Europe, and about twice as much as in Switzerland.

What about the massively bureaucratic welfare states of Europe? Actually, public employment is higher in the United States, at just under 7 per 100 workers, than in Germany, Spain, or Italy, though it is lower than in dirigiste France (which is nevertheless below 8 per 100). Total government expenditure as a percentage of GDP in 2004 was lower in the United States than in most of Europe, but not lower than in Ireland or Switzerland. The 2007 unemployment rate in the United States of just over 4.5 percent (those were the days) was indeed lower than in France, Greece, Spain, and Germany at over 8 percent. But the American rate was higher than that of the Netherlands, Denmark, and Austria.

But Europe is greener-than-thou, right? Well, true, the United States recycles much less waste than Germany or the Netherlands, but about the same percentage as France and more than Britain. American greenhouse gas emissions have increased since 1990 whereas Germany's and Britain's have gone way down, but the U.S. increase is not much more than that of Italy and lags behind Austria, Ireland, and Spain.

We have all heard tell of the vast concentration of wealth among the richest of the rich in the United States, a tale of rampant and increasing inequality. If you find this scandalous, wait until you hear what's been going on in the cradle-to-grave welfare state of egalitarian Sweden. To begin with, the raw figures are not dissimilar: The wealthiest 1 percent of Swedes owned 21.9 percent of total wealth in 2000, compared with 20.8 percent for the wealthiest one percent of Americans. But, Baldwin notes, the figures for Sweden appear to be grossly underestimated because of the propensity of rich Swedes to take their fortunes offshore to avoid Swedish tax rates and of countervailing government tax incentives to try to keep privately owned mega-firms at home:

> If we add in the wealth moved from Sweden and factor in the tax breaks for closely held family firms granted by the Swedish tax authorities, the net worth of the richest percentile of Swedes increases by 50 percent. A similar calculation for the top percentile of Americans ups its net worth a mere 3 percent. . . . This brings the overall share of wealth held by those in the top Swedish percentile to 42 percent for 2000. That is twice as intense a concentration of wealth as is found in America for the same year.

The point is not that there are no differences between the United States and Europe; it's that there is no good basis for assigning the United States and Europe to fundamentally different categories. On most measures presented here, the United States falls somewhere within the European range—some European countries higher, some lower. When the United States does occupy a top or bottom position, which occurs occasionally but not necessarily more frequently than other particular European countries, it is usually not by much. Baldwin offers some comparisons that break the "United States" ranking down by state, illustrating the regional variations within a country that spans a continent, and demonstrating that some American states are more "European" than many European countries. The United States has high murder rates. But Maine, New Hampshire, and North Dakota have lower murder rates than England, France, and Sweden. Europe is more highly unionized, but the state of New York has a higher percentage of workers who are union members than does Germany. In general, the United States hews closest to the profile of an archetypal southern European country.

If you've noticed that Baldwin's examples compare the United States with Western European countries, you are correct, and there's a reason for it: "Were I to include the new members of the EU as well, Europe and the United States would be even less distinguishable and my argument would be won almost by default."

Baldwin is dismissive of the "tub-thumpers on the right wing, for whom the United States is the greatest nation and comparisons are drawn merely to underline that preeminence" as "predictable . . . and intellectually of no consequence." He finds conservatives to be generally uninterested in Europe as such, noting that Mitt Romney got no traction among potential Republican presidential primary voters from his attacks on the French social welfare system.

Yet he reserves more scorn for the other side:

> The vast majority of Americans' comparisons are undertaken by social scientists with liberal leanings who hope that the United States will some day approximate Europe when it comes to family allowances, universal health insurance, parental leave, and the like. For them, Europe means northern Europe. They either ignore the south or see it too as aspiring to north European status. Stockholm is the mecca toward which the social science faithful pray.

In so doing, they fail to note that "the jockeying for position takes place at the very pinnacle of the totem pole" of prosperity as measured by the U.N.'s Human Development Index, "within a section that is less than 2 percent of its total length." Thus, the narcissism of minor differences.

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Does Baldwin finally overstate the similarities between the United States and Europe? If so, perhaps it is because he focuses on the quantifiable and material and accordingly underestimates the role ideas play in the formation of the social and political reality around us.

One suspects, for example, that Baldwin would regard the passage of Barack Obama's health care reform initiative mainly as more evidence of American and European similarity. There wasn't that big a difference in health outcomes before Obamacare (though Americans spend much more), and there probably won't be that much afterward. What's the big fuss?

Yet this doesn't quite do justice to the politics of the moment, where the debate for both sides is about more than the specifics of the schemes by which one obtains insurance coverage and care. There are, indeed, competing visions of how society ought to be organized: Neither side is likely to prevail definitively, and outcomes reflect the give-and-take. This is true in the case of American liberals and conservatives, and other societies likewise strike balances between contending positions, producing the comparative outcomes Baldwin lays out.

But let us not try to expunge all differences. "American" and "European" continue to have resonance as "ideal types," in Max Weber's old term. To say that the "social scientists with liberal leanings" and "tub-thumpers on the right wing" are confused or intellectually irrelevant is almost to say that political debate and the means by which it takes place (the Internet, for example) don't really matter. That's rather a lofty perspective. Baldwin's facts and figures do, indeed, point to the fundamental similarities in American and European social and political arrangements. But if you want to know what went into the making of those outcomes, you need to take into account the aspirations of the tub-thumpers and the Stockholm-worshippers, not just what they are missing.

There are some of each on both sides of the Atlantic, but there are relatively more tub-thumpers in the United States and more Stockholm-worshippers in Europe. That's where Mars and Venus come back in. ♦

B&A

Shadow Master

Rubens was very much a figure of his time, and artist too. **BY COLIN FLEMING**

When a surname becomes the basis for an adjective, the resulting meaning tends to be resoundingly one-dimensional. To wit: the Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens, an artist with a penchant for busty nudes replete with puckerings, the occasional roll, and dimpled mounds, begetting the word "Rubenesque" for any amply proportioned female.

Master of Shadows
The Secret Diplomatic Career of the Painter Peter Paul Rubens
by Mark Lamster
Nan A. Talese, 336 pp., $29.95

Chances are, you're much better acquainted with the adjective than the work of the painter; few people can cite a Rubens painting by name, but "Rubenesque" is a word you could hear while watching *American Idol*. History so often recalls Rubens as an Old World master of a painting style—symbolic representation, heavy on Greek and biblical references—that we now think of as dusty and far removed. After all, how many modern museum-strollers have the time to invest in all of the classical books you'd need to make sense of his symbolism? But despite the one-dimensionality associated with the painter's name, here's a book that posits Rubens as a multitasker to best any electronic gizmo-equipped world-beater going today.

Rubens wasn't content with merely being, conceivably, the world's greatest painter for the better portion of his adult life. Rather, he outfitted his vocational title with a host of others. Like superspy, for one—in addition to treaty negotiator, statesmen well met, wealthy landowner, antiquities dealer, factory head. Rubens enjoyed a joke, but he was a prideful man, and you have to wonder what he would think of the irony that rarely is his name associated with top-level performance skills across a range of disciplines and most often with multiple trips to the refrigerator.

Rubens the politico-spy is just one of his many iterations that emerge in the pages of *Master of Shadows*, but it's perhaps the least likely variant, given what was regarded as an artist's lack of prospects when it came to upward mobility in the 16th and 17th centuries. Painters were viewed as manual laborers, members of the "folk" because they worked with their hands. They could, conceivably, earn a fortune—and Rubens certainly did—with royal commissions, and frequently worked as factory bosses, with helpers and students executing large portions of the paintings that bore the master's name. But rarely were they conscripted into diplomatic service, despite what Mark Lamster cites as the most natural cover: They had the ear of kings, queens, dukes, and assorted courtiers. These were the people, after all, sitting for hours at a time, one on one, with the man with the brush.

Rubens the master portraitist was also a master ingratiator, and was eventually put on military salary by the Spanish crown (which had dominion over his native Antwerp). Handsome, affable, quick-witted, and a natural salesman—who also knew when to shut his mouth—Rubens was indeed "a capable diplomatic operator at ease in the most rarefied precincts of European power." Lamster goes on to call him "the perfect spy." There's no doubt that Rubens's chameleonic gifts were useful to Europe's checkered and com-

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bustible politics. If war was not raging somewhere, it was likely about to be. Intrigue was everywhere, with one backroom deal being canceled out by another, and a third in place as a contingency plan. Rubens's typical ruse was that of some art-centric business: The standard dodge could be that he had an altarpiece to execute, or some restoration work was needed in a king's chambers, or a valuable Rembrandt collection was in need of authentication. Whatever got him in the room with Europe's decision-makers.

An impressive profiteer in his own right, Rubens managed to balance affairs of state with his personal business interests, displaying his trademark calculation and stoicism along the way. He was anything but a firebrand, at least externally; repeatedly browbeaten by various members of the nobility, the painter-*cum*-spy worked ceaselessly to put himself in a better position to please, typically winning the favor of a king (such as Spain's Philip IV) who had previously held his lack of a birthright against him.

"I am displeased at your mixing up a painter in affairs of such importance," Philip huffed to his Aunt Isabella, co-sovereign of the Spanish Netherlands. Later, Philip would become enamored with the painter, ostensibly unable to determine whether he thought more of him as an artist or as a man who moved along heel-draggers on the political front.

Rubens approached negotiations as he might have approached a painting. That is, as a problem to be solved, requiring just the right balance of materials and techniques—shadow, color, and symbolism on the painting side of the equation; pointed reasons, financial assurances, and talk of shared interests at court. On occasion, Rubens overextended himself, negotiating treaties without the authority to do so; but there's little denying that he was a polymath qualified to be especially well versed in political matters, knowing human nature so well, and history too. Lamster liberally quotes Rubens's aphoristic political musings, which tend to resonate now as then: "Confidence alone is the foundation of all human commerce," he opined, and there's little in his own adventures to suggest otherwise.

Intriguingly, we see Rubens's political dalliances feeding into his art, ceding it greater narrative scope. His early work—featuring all manner of convoluted subtext (even Rubens said you'd be taxed to discover what he meant without his help)—gave way to a style where the relationship between metaphor and meaning became more direct. He had a pressing need to make sure his clientele understood precisely what his art was conveying. Satiating human vanity went a long way in Rubens's political career, and positing a king as some kind of metaphorical god of justice and happiness, beloved of his flock, made for a favorable frame of mind when a favor was needed.

At times, Rubens inserted his own image into his paintings depicting some diplomatic triumph or other, a de facto acknowledgment of his own role in European power relations. He reworked his *Adoration of the Magi*—executed in 1609 in recognition of the signing of the Twelve Years' Truce between the northern Netherlands' provinces and the Spanish-controlled lower region—to feature his own person atop a horse, the worthy crusader. The truce had expired, but Rubens's role as a mediator had not.

Few scholars, as Lamster points out, pay much attention to Rubens's diplomatic career. The art historians, not surprisingly, tend to care only insofar as the machinations at court informed what Rubens rendered on the canvas; political historians often overlook Rubens's accomplishments as an intermediary because of their fleeting effects. "Rubens's greatest achievement as a statesman, the treaty he negotiated between Spain and England, is now a footnote in the grand sweep of seventeenth-century international relations," Lamster writes. Many of the measures Rubens brought about didn't last, and were canceled out by war, or new accords. And a reconciliation of Spain's Dutch territory and the northern Dutch provinces did not take hold until eight years after Rubens's death, thereby keeping him from witnessing a diplomatic dream, of sorts. It was a dream that never would have transpired without Rubens's years of intense identity-shifting, an ability akin to removing one painted image to replace it with another, and then back again, perpetually. ♦

'Venus and Adonis' (c. 1635) by Peter Paul Rubens

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART / ART RESOURCE

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B&A

Faith in Government

The strikingly divergent opinions of the Founders.

BY RYAN T. ANDERSON

Cross in the Mojave National Preserve, California

AP PHOTO / LIBERTY LEGAL INSTITUTE, HENRY AND WANDA SANDOZ

Everybody wants the Founding Fathers on their side, especially when it comes to First Amendment jurisprudence. Want to promote religion in the public square and the necessity of religion for good morals and politics? Just pull out a few choice quotations from George Washington's Farewell Address, or his public proclamations of days of prayer and thanksgiving. Want to defend your secularism or rationalism? Just refer to Thomas Jefferson's "wall of separation," or his redacted Bible. Want to split the difference and push governmental impartiality among religions, and between religion and non-religion? Why, just invoke (incorrectly, as we'll see) the authority of James Madison and his famous "Memorial and Remonstrance."

God and the Founders
Madison, Washington, and Jefferson
by Vincent Phillip Munoz
Cambridge, 252 pp., $85

Perhaps this helps explain why questions of religion and politics are so messy in American public life—and even messier in today's Supreme Court jurisprudence. Consider how, on the same day in 2005, the Court issued two different 5-4 decisions on cases involving public displays of the Ten Commandments. The Court allowed a Texas state capitol Decalogue monument but ruled against Kentucky courthouse postings of the same—repeatedly invoking the Founders in both majority and dissenting opinions. The merits of each case aside, how could educated and intelligent judges repeatedly disagree with each other, all the while claiming that the Founders are on their side?

The answer, according to Vincent Phillip Munoz, professor of political science at Notre Dame, is simple: There is no view that belongs to "the Founders" as such, and any attempt to treat them as one is destined to fail. In what is sure to become required reading for anyone working in the field, *God and the Founders*, Munoz explains how our misreading of the Founders has led to 60 years of incomprehensible jurisprudence. He carefully studies the historical record to tease out the philosophies on religion of our three most prominent Founders: Washington, Jefferson, and Madison. Beyond simply noting their intellectual diversity, Munoz does something quite helpful: He interprets them correctly, which is no small feat when it comes to this topic.

Though touted as the Father of our Country, George Washington is regularly overlooked by scholars doing work on church-state relations—in part because the Supreme Court, in its landmark 1947 case *Everson* v. *Board of Education*, assumed that the Founders agreed on religion and that Madison and Jefferson (themselves agreeing, the Court assumed, on strict separation) therefore spoke for them all. But Washington's neglect can also be explained by his never having written extended treatises on the topic: His views have to be pieced together from his letters and actions. Trudging through this material, Munoz concludes that "Washington consistently sought to use governmental authority to encourage religion and to foster the religious character of the American people." Washington's theory was simple: Since republican self-government was impossible without moral virtue, and moral virtue impossible without religion, the state had a legitimate interest in promoting religion. So long as the state's action was broadly ecumenical (not favoring any particular sect), and didn't force anyone to worship against their will, the good of religion could be promoted without violating religious liberty. At the same time, since civic goods and the obligations of citizenship reigned supreme for Washington, an individual's right to free exercise of religion could be limited as the public order required.

If George Washington thought religion could be promoted for its civic value, Thomas Jefferson took a similarly instrumental approach to church-state

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relations. The difference is that Jefferson looked askance on organized religion. On his accounting, the state could promote religion, provided it was of the right, rationalist sort. But what, then, of the most famous of all Jeffersonian quips about the wall of separation? As Munoz carefully documents, Jefferson meant it to separate *church* and state, not *religion* and state. In particular, the wall was to "impede a specific type of religious belief and to suppress a particular type of religious influence"—namely, ecclesiastical clergy of the orthodox variety.

Taking a quite different tack from Washington, Jefferson argued that history "furnishes no example of a priest-ridden people maintaining a free civil government." The state, then, could try to diminish this type of religion and promote a healthy alternative. But because Jefferson was a staunch defender of religious liberty—a natural right, in his book, based upon his Lockean religious epistemology—he thought that the state could do so only in noncoercive ways, without punishing citizens for their beliefs or affecting their civil rights. After exploring the intricacies of Jefferson's theory, Munoz diligently documents how Jefferson the statesman diverged from it in practice.

Although much attention has been paid to the father of the Constitution, James Madison, few really understand his theory of religious liberty and church-state relations. Thankfully, Munoz is one of the few. Responding to the claims of *Everson*, both the late Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Justice Clarence Thomas have argued that Madison's argument in the "Memorial and Remonstrance" was for *nonpreferentialism*—the view that the state can favor religion so long as it plays no favorites with any sects. Justice David Souter has countered that the "Memorial" argument was really separationist—that *Everson* was right after all. Meanwhile, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor has argued that, on Madison's view, if a generally applicable law conflicted with some people's religious obligations, the constitutional protection of the free exercise of religion required granting them exemptions.

But none of these opinions is correct. The key, Munoz argues, is to recognize the social-compact framework at the heart of the "Memorial." According to that Madisonian framework, people leave the state of nature and enter into political community without in any way bringing their religious beliefs or practices into the social contract. For Madison, religious liberty is inalienable and requires the state never to recognize religion, as such, for any purpose, positive or negative. Rather than building a wall of separation—which would entail recognizing religion, if only to exclude it—Munoz argues that Madison thought the solution was "state noncognizance of religion." Whereas Jefferson wouldn't want clergy receiving state monies, Madison would say that their clerical status must not be taken into account: They should be judged for eligibility on the same basis as other civic groups.

After delineating the philosophies and practices of Washington, Jefferson, and Madison, Munoz turns to some recent Supreme Court jurisprudence. He translates his historical analyses into workable judicial precepts and applies these Washingtonian, Jeffersonian, and Madisonian legal theories to some 34 cases involving establishment or free exercise disputes. Unsurprisingly, we discover that not only do these three Founders more frequently than not disagree among themselves; they also disagree with our contemporary Supreme Court about half the time—which is what one would expect when the Court picks a Founder to cite based on its preferred outcome.

Munoz concludes with short evaluations of the three Founders' views, finally endorsing a modified Madisonian theory—which he calls "no legal privileges, no legal penalties"—as the best. But best in what sense? Munoz never quite says. It can't be best in a historical sense, for none of the Founders actually articulated it. Is it best in the practical sense that it gives us the results we most want? Or is it best in the philosophical sense of being the most reasonable? In any case, is Munoz's modified Madisonian theory of any relevance to our actual Constitution? Philosophical soundness or practical value would not make it the principle that We the People duly ratified.

Which raises another question: Why write this book? Clearing away the weeds in the historical record is always a good thing, for which we are in his debt; but what are the practical and contemporary jurisprudential applications? The second half of *God and the Founders* deals exclusively with recent case law and reviews how using these Founders as interpretive keys to the First Amendment might help settle the disputes. But this is an odd approach to constitutional interpretation, especially for original-meaning constitutionalists. What matters is not what the Founders thought, or even what they might have intended, but what the Constitution meant to the Americans who ratified it.

For those who take constitutional republicanism seriously, the critical consideration is what We the People agreed to when we ratified the Constitution. Washingtonian, Jeffersonian, and Madisonian philosophies, as such, were never up for ratification. And it is implausible that the citizens of the early republic, or their representatives, were consenting to any of these philosophies. Clearly, for example, Americans eschewed Madisonian noncognizance when they demanded that President Madison declare "a day of public humiliation and fasting and of prayer to Almighty God," or when they hired state-funded military and congressional chaplains. One must investigate, rather, the principles that the citizens understood themselves to be endorsing when they ratified the Constitution: If one doesn't like the results, one can change the Constitution through the agreed-upon measures. Anything less fails to take constitutional republicanism—or the people's right to self-determination—seriously.

Twice, Munoz suggests that he is sensitive to this criticism, promising to explore the original meaning of the First Amendment in his next study. That forthcoming volume will be important—especially since claiming the Founders as a whole for one's side may be not only irrelevant to sound jurisprudence but, as Munoz shows us here, impossible as well. ♦

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B&A

Exit Strategy

Preparing for death as a way of life.

BY WILLIAM DOINO JR.

Death comes calling for us all, though few people are ever actually prepared for it. Two years ago Jeffry Hendrix, a Methodist minister turned Roman Catholic, received the news we all dread: a diagnosis of terminal illness. In his case, it was kidney cancer, leading to surgery and chemotherapy.

The illness dramatically changed not just Hendrix's day-to-day activities, but his whole outlook. *A Little Guide for Your Last Days* was written in response to his circumstances, and is a meditation about mortality. Though brief, it is a book of unusual power; and while distinctly Catholic, its themes remain universal. Its opening lines are stark and direct:

> If you have been graced with the certainty of your own death due, perhaps, to a doctor's diagnosis of a terminal disease, you are already ahead of the great majority of human beings alive on earth. You know something from which millions upon millions of persons spend millions upon millions of dollars trying to distract themselves. In our day of militant, technologically-enhanced popular culture—and as never before in the history of the species *homo sapiens*—people want to keep as far as possible from the awareness of their own mortality.

It was not always so, writes Hendrix. Death used to be at the forefront of man's consciousness. *Memento mori*, the Latin phrase meaning "remember you must die," was woven into our cultural fabric, as was the supernatural awareness of our dependency: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Today, we still interest ourselves in death—only because we must, as it intrudes upon us every day—but it is a paradoxical interest, one that keeps its distance and employs protective shields. As Hendrix notes, "Mortality, being so hidden and kept from the general awareness," makes death a thing of fascination—"as long as it is someone *else* who is being so fascinating." Speaking or thinking about death in the first person is disquieting, out of step with the daily march of life.

A Little Guide for Your Last Days
by Jeffry Hendrix
Bridegroom, 108 pp., $19.95

Mosaic fragment from Pompeii

This brief volume examines the flight from mortality, what Ernest Becker described as our collective "denial of death." Hendrix finds the great mass of individuals bouncing upon the surface of life, never inquiring about the fate that awaits them. Their attitude is understandable: No one wants to be told when the clock strikes midnight, and the apprehension death can provoke in anyone can be intense. Hendrix doesn't hold back describing his own fears.

In searching for answers, however, Hendrix recounts how he came to find them in Catholicism. Through the sacraments, he has received peace and strength; he writes about the loving presence of God, the redemptive power of suffering, and the comfort prayer and confession bring. It is a moving narrative, even as he knows that many readers will not share his beliefs. He doesn't argue with them: This is not a work of apologetics but a series of gentle observations, for anyone open to the transcendent.

Indeed, there is a psychological depth here that rewards a second reading. Anyone who has ever lost a close relative or friend knows what the immediate days and weeks afterward are like, with feelings of intense pain, isolation, disbelief, and an acute awareness of the fragility of life. Hendrix underwent a similar experience after his diagnosis, except that in his case it was because he was losing himself and his attachments to this world. He has emerged with a renewed appreciation for the gifts he once took for granted—family, friends, faith, and (shortened) life—for even as his "outer nature is wasting away" his soul is "being renewed every day."

Self-gratification is more appealing than gratitude, and few people want to stop and address the consequential questions Hendrix asks: "Why am I still here, and what am I supposed to do with the time I still have left?" One thing the terminal should *not* do, he writes, is engage in frenetic activities as if nothing were wrong; such escapism only breeds disappointment and a realization that nothing has changed. Acting responsibly, by making sure you don't leave behind unnecessary burdens to loved ones, is encouraged; above all, people facing death should never succumb to resentment, or blame others for not understanding their circumstances.

Mortality is a delicate subject, and easy to treat superficially. *A Little Guide* avoids such pitfalls by staying centered and conveying Christianity's hope. It is also an eloquent plea to break through our carnival culture, and a reminder that we are all, inescapably, living out our last days—even if we don't yet know the number of them. ♦

William Doino Jr. is a contributor to First Things *and other publications.*

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B&A

Ironic Confusion

Whatever happened to that fun-loving billionaire?

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

I once read an entire chapter of *Gödel, Escher, Bach*. I learned how to navigate the intimidating street grids of Washington, D.C., and Brooklyn, New York. I usually know who did it on *CSI* before the first commercial break. The point I'm trying to make here is that I am reasonably skilled at decoding plots. But it's been 48 hours since I saw *Iron Man 2* and I am still confused; it was harder to follow than *Gödel, Escher, Bach*.

Iron Man 2
Directed by Jon Favreau

The first *Iron Man*, released in 2008, was one of the great surprises of the last few years. It was essentially a 1930s screwball comedy masquerading as a superhero picture, with Robert Downey Jr. as a fun-loving billionaire industrialist with a wisecracking secretary (Gwyneth Paltrow), a wiseguy valet (Jon Favreau, also the director), and an adorable pet in the form of a robotic arm. Infectiously high-spirited and alive as few people have ever been on screen, Downey was electric, and he *was* the movie.

For reasons that elude me, in *Iron Man 2*, Downey's Tony Stark is a drag. He pouts, he broods, he talks about how his father didn't love him, he gets drunk, he acts irresponsibly, and in general, he's not very good company. Everything that was fun about him has been transferred to the new movie's villain, a rival billionaire industrialist played by the extraordinary Sam Rockwell. Now it's Rockwell who's having fun being rich, Rockwell who has the good lines, Rockwell who engages in the fast-talking banter. Downey seems determined to change his last name to Downer.

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

So that's baffling. But it's nothing next to the movie's plot. There's a Russian guy played by Mickey Rourke. He becomes an evil Iron Man. He is able to do this by assembling the parts for an Iron Man suit in a Moscow tenement. The first movie suggested the only reason Downey was able to make the suit is that he had billions of dollars and access to nuclear materiel, but that goes by the wayside here; evidently all you need is a blueprint and a welding gun and you're good to go.

Rourke goes to Monte Carlo to disrupt the Grand Prix car race. He uses his suit to destroy cars, and then goes after Downey's car. But how could Rourke have known this, since we see that Downey only decides to drive the car (instead of a professional race-car driver) a minute before the race begins? Most of what Rourke does makes no sense, and he uses a Russian accent that makes it impossible to understand what he's saying, so maybe it did make sense but I just couldn't make out the words.

But all that pales next to the sudden appearance in the movie by Samuel L. Jackson. He shows up wearing an eyepatch. He says his name is Nick Fury. Downey knows who he is and mumbles something about superheroes. Jackson says Downey's late father was a part of some organization Jackson runs. Also sitting there is Scarlett Johansson, who works for Downey's company but is, it turns out, actually part of Jackson's organization. She does lots of good karate. She works for Gwyneth Paltrow, who likes her, then doesn't like her.

"I know what you're up to," Gwyneth says to Scarlett. Then, two scenes later, Scarlett is Gwyneth's closest aide. Jackson wants Downey to be part of his organization, only he doesn't. He gives Downey an injection of something that temporarily cures him of the radiation poisoning from his nuclear-powered heart (don't ask) that's secretly killing him, and gives him a box with stuff in it. The box helps Downey figure something out that helps him find a more permanent cure. But since Jackson seems to know what's in the box already, why doesn't he just tell Downey what it is?

At the end of the movie, which isn't all that bad but isn't all that good either, Downey opens a folder that says "The Avengers" on it. I know there used to be a comic book called "The Avengers," so I guess that's what Jackson's organization is, only I think he said it was called Shield. But none of this is ever explained, even for a minute, so unless you come to the movie with a deep grounding in comic-book lore, you won't have a clue what any of this is about.

Robert Downey Jr.

I prefer to think that I am just not smart enough to get what's going on in *Iron Man 2* because I read that it cost $200 million to make. Surely even in Hollywood, nobody would spend a quarter of a billion dollars on a movie without establishing elementary principles of fact and logic. Oh, wait: I forgot *Spider-Man 3*. And *Pirates of the Caribbean 3*. And *Transformers 2*.

I can only imagine what *Gödel, Escher, Bach 2* would cost to make. ♦

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"CNN and CBS, two suitors with a long history of courtship, have engaged in direct talks in recent weeks about more extensive combinations of their news resources, according to several executives who have been briefed on the discussions." —New York Times, *May 5, 2010*

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CBS, CNN Merger Causes Programming Mayhem

LINEUP SHUFFLED 'TIL SOMETHING STICKS'

Larry King Stars in 'How I Met Your Mother'

BY HOWARD KURTZ

MIKE MATUS

Larry King provides a breath of fresh air on CBS.

Network executives from both CBS and CNN have spent the past week frantically trying to figure out a lineup that will gain them an audience—so far, none has. Since the merging of the two networks last month, the 'CBS Evening News' remains mired in third place behind NBC and ABC. CNN's programming continues to maintain its own basement ratings behind Fox, CNBC, MSNBC, Headline News, Animal Planet, and the Gameshow Network. As a result, says CBS News and Sports President Sean McManus, "we've had to take drastic actions, merging more than just the two news divisions."

"At first," says McManus, "we thought viewers would be excited to see Katie Couric suddenly popping up on CNN's 'American Morning.' And whoever does 'American Morning' would appear on 'The Early Show' on CBS. We got nothing. Not a single blip." McManus and his staff then decided to step things up by tampering with the evening schedule. "On '60 Minutes,' instead of a few last words from Andy Rooney, we inserted Larry King. The difference in viewership was negligible." Leslie Moonves, the president of CBS, was disappointed the two newsrooms could not make a dent in the ratings and realized "desperate times require desperate measures."

Beginning next week, even the non-news programming will be part of the CBS-CNN shuffle. Anderson Cooper will find himself competing in the next 'Survivor' series. "Frankly, I don't care if it's Borneo, Gabon, or Tocantins. Been there, done that," says Cooper. Jeff Bewkes, chairman of TimeWarner, parent of CNN, agrees: "Anderson has been to every godforsaken corner of the planet. He will win it in a walk—and CNN will be a million dollars richer." Meanwhile, Larry King will be appearing in at least ten episodes of 'How I Met Your Mother' on CBS, though no one at CBS would comment on King's role. King himself said in a statement, "I look forward to exploring new opportunities and getting to know my cast members. I also have no qualms about love scenes or anything that might involve partial

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